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The Bauhaus (per)forms

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THE BAUHAUS (PER)FORMS

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

in

The Department of Communication Studies

by
Lisa Flanagan
B.A., University of Texas, 1990
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I dedicate this study to you all, my family in every sense.

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ABSTRACT

This study uses the methods and discourses of creative/performative writing and formal aesthetics to evoke the visual aesthetic principles exercised and developed by the Bauhaus and its Stage Workshop. It explores the creative connections between visual and written forms that can affect meaning through primary, universal expression and comprehension. First, a connection is established between creative/performative writing, avant-garde theater concepts and related Bauhaus performance documents. This initial graph contains the key forms of visual and written expression used in the remaining sections. These further areas of inquiry include, an evocative rendering of the multiple and partial histories that include the Bauhaus, an investigation of formal aesthetics and as interpreted by the Bauhaus, and interpretation and investigation of three of the Bauhaus Stage Workshop performances applying written and aesthetic methods aimed at richer analysis. The Bauhaus' development of formal aesthetics, particularly the Stage Workshop performances, provide a dynamic testing ground for how creative/performative writing and formal aesthetics can aid in expression and comprehension of visual artistic works. In operating as both methods and subjects of inquiry, creative/performative writing and formal aesthetics offer a means of stressing the evocative and citational power of creative discourses, by emphasizing a visual/experiential model for scholarly research. The study concludes with recognition of the need for further investigation of the power of primary formal aesthetics upon comprehension and expression of experiences that might otherwise lose consensus due to cultural variables.

CHAPTER ONE

MANIFESTO: THIS THESIS

this thesis
speaks of the need for color,
shapes, lines and textures
that lead us to read space
between the wor(l)ds upon the page.
this thesis writes itself into a dance of
time
rhythm
movement
direction
choreography
momentum
contrast
chance.
this thesis is a top that spins upon its axis
creating circles around reason and doubt
asking
what is form?
how do we talk about shape?
how do we talk about colors in a black and white text?
how do we talk about the feel of metal or the sensation of snow?
this thesis is graphic
has motion
makes patterns

keeps tempo
dyes hues.
this thesis is
talking
telling
speaking
dreaming
the creation of a language
to do justice to its tale.
this thesis is the bauhaus
form in motion
space play
slat dance
color song.
this thesis moves across boundaries
of
poetry
chronology
graphic design
anecdote
memo, missive, manifesto
kid's tales
big tales
little tales
history
the visual
the oral

the literary

the pop-pro-personal

performing arts.

this thesis is mystory

museum guide

picture book

program notes

stage blocking

primer

maze.

this thesis is written

spoken

colored

diagrammed

rendered

drawn.

this thesis lifts itself up

off the page

to cross the margins

of its form

to plot the trajectories of its dance

to urge a sing-along.

this thesis

creates

text

ure

in its space.

"People who are trying to discover something behind all this- will not find anything, because there is nothing to discover *behind* this. Everything is there, right in what one perceives! There are no feelings which are 'expressed,' rather, feelings are evoked.... The whole thing is a 'game'. It is a freed and freeing 'game'.... Pure absolute form."(quoted in Wingler, 158, emphasis in original)

CHAPTER TWO

INTRODUCTION: WORD FORMS/ FORM WORDS

Upside-down trees swingin' free.
Busses float and buildings dangle:
Now and then it's nice to see
The world- from a different angle.
-Shel Silverstein ("New World" in Falling Up 62)

I am almost halfway through my second pregnancy, attending an academic convention in Chicago. To fill a free afternoon, I hitch a ride to the Museum of Contemporary Art. On the upper level of the museum I come across a wondrous place filled with dancing colored shapes. I have entered the world of Alexander Calder. It is a world of metal and wire and paint, crafted so as to set these materials alight upon the wind. It is a mobile world; a ballet of forms that moves me. This is what I want to talk about! His bits and scraps suggest so much yet reveal nothing but their form(s) in motion.

I, in my own body of expanding hips and shifting balance, am swept into the dance that spirals and undulates above my head. I am lost then found in the choreography of their trajectories. My center of gravity plays tricks on my sense of equilibrium as my body prepares for the coming density. I no longer stand ready to extend along a diagonal path of motion. Rather, I take the stance of the solid and sturdy triangle, stable upon my base. I am grounded, centered in this moment that flows around me. Do I mean the pregnancy or the mobiles? I think, both.

My reverie takes me within the shape of motion of the large mobile that floats above me (see figure1). I follow the pendulous orbits of the red and orange lollipop flowers that contest their tenuous suspension upon swaying metal reeds. Playful black crescents flit nervously below. At the point of counterbalance, a pantograph traces the

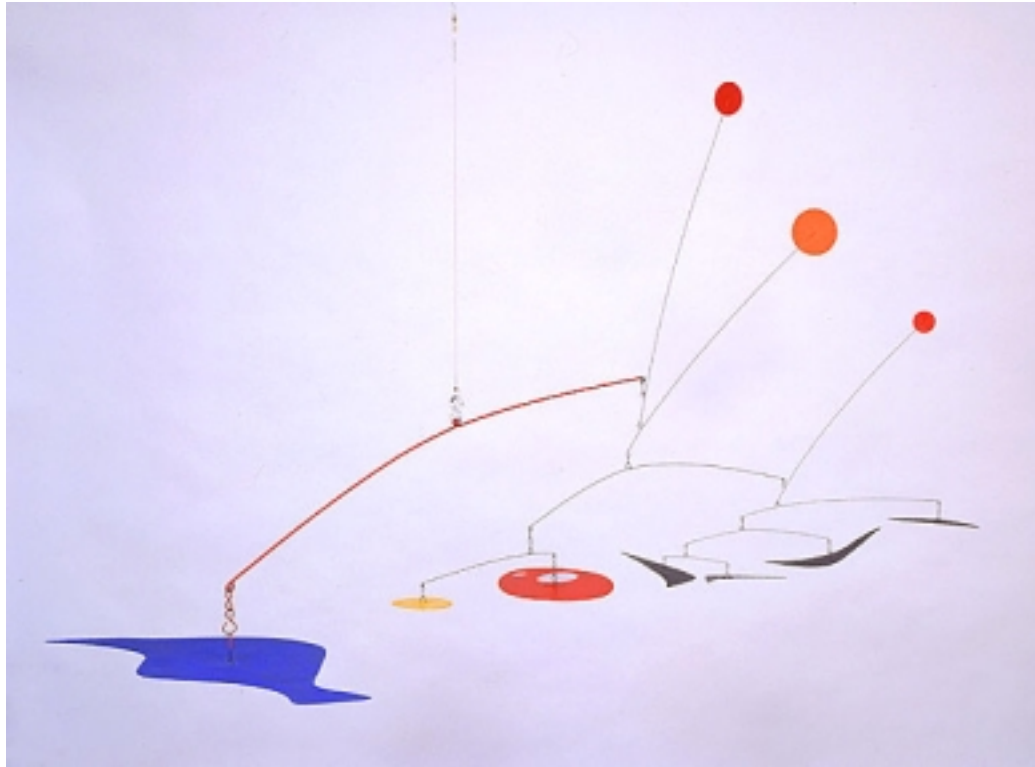


Figure 1. Calder, Alexander. Polychrome and Horizontal Bluebird. 1954.

yellow center at the heart of a red disc. A ballast wave of blue spins counter rotation upon the taut line that holds the polar weights in tensive equilibrium. The ebb and flow of the composite movement is my balance wheel. It regulates the motion of my rapture as I gaze upward on the hypnotic reel. My reverie becomes like a tightrope walker that extends from my grounded dreams of dancing to the ballet of floating form above me. This is a mobile for a mother, providing visions of weightless flight.

Alexander Calder's Polychrome and Horizontal Bluebird offered me the impetus for this study. In short, it suggested how the tradition of formal aesthetics is grounded (or takes flight) in the creative application of the artist, which in turn prompts the inventive interplay of the viewer. It is this interrelationship between tradition and invention, an

aesthetic system and its application, and the crafted work and the viewer that interests me. Further, just as Calder experimented with visual shapes in space, so too I experiment with my given medium. Namely, I pursue how word forms in print space might evoke the largely visual and formal aesthetic works of the Bauhaus Stage Workshop.

The main subject of this study is the Bauhaus Stage Workshop and the use of formal aesthetics in the compositions that were staged and performed there. A secondary or implied subject is creative or performative writing, as a tool for scholarly research and production. Understanding that the Bauhaus Stage Workshop used formal aesthetics to investigate the principles, properties, and possibilities of formal aesthetics, so too formal aesthetics is both a subject and a method of inquiry and interpretation in this study. As a discursive tool or methodology, formal aesthetics are used to describe and interpret the work of the Bauhaus and, specifically, the performance pieces staged by the Bauhaus Stage Workshop. It also guides my selection and application of creative writing genres and styles, and the layouts and fonts on the printed page. As such, creative-performative writing becomes an implied subject, and an explicit method in this study. In short, it is used to interpret formal aesthetics as used by the Bauhaus Stage Workshop. My main aim is to experiment with how formal aesthetics might be descriptively evoked by stressing the creative, as well as the practical, connections between visual and written expressions. The significance of this study lies in my emphasis on the primary, rather than secondary, associations or interpretations of formal aesthetics and my use of creative-performative writing practices to evoke or create the experience of those associations. As such, I intend to add to the research and production tools we use to talk about performance.

SUBJECT

The subjects of this study are the integrated topics of formal aesthetics, the Bauhaus Stage Workshop and creative-performative writing. The Bauhaus was a German art and architecture school founded in 1919 by Walter Gropius and dissolved in 1933 by the National Socialist government. Informed by democratic socialism, the mission of the school was to reunite traditional craftsmanship and artistic expression as one in the same endeavor, thereby eliminating elitist class assumptions implicit in their separation. The main focus of the school was architecture or “living spaces” that combined formal design and modern technology and formal design for the betterment of all people. In both pedagogy and practice, the Bauhaus emphasized form as an expression of function in design. Formal aesthetics were stressed as a means of creating highly functional and visually appealing works, which could be used and enjoyed by all. The school’s embrace of modern technology was aimed at helping the artist-craftsman create products efficiently and cheaply.

Added to the curriculum in 1921, The Bauhaus Stage Workshop was conceived of as a course where formal principles and properties could be tested by means of live enactment or performance. The first director was Lothar Schreyer who, due to his dramatic sensibility, was asked to resign in 1923. A disciple of the Der Sturm gallery group from Berlin, Schreyer was criticized for the expressionistic sentimentality that characterized his work by faculty and students. In brief, the Bauhaus collective was looking for less fevered and personalized modes of expression, particularly in the wake of the horrors of World War I and the fiery nationalistic rhetoric that gave rise to such violence.

Schreyer was replaced by Oskar Schlemmer, who ran the workshop from 1923-1929. Schlemmer was largely interested in investigating the human form in space. His dances and productions emphasized the abstracted expressions of the body in space and as conceived through the language of formal aesthetics. Descriptions of Schlemmer's performances articulate visual compositions that are reflexive toward their formal conception and elements and yet are also emotionally engaging. In other words, it appears that, as practiced by Schlemmer, formal aesthetics provoked inquiry and evoked human feelings and experiences. The Bauhaus stage activities were vital to the school as a source of both recreation and a playful expression of the architectural aims of the school. The stage is where the Bauhaus experimented with the human dynamics involved in their democratization of spatial composition and expression.

In this study, I discuss the history and curriculum of the Bauhaus and its stage workshop before I focus on the formal aesthetics as conceived of and applied by the Bauhaus faculty and students. In Chapter 6, I undertake an elementary "lesson" in the formal elements of line, shape, color and texture. These elements are disseminated in light of Bauhaus pedagogy and practice and, in Chapters Eight, Ten and Twelve, they are further particularized through a description and interpretation of three Bauhaus Stage Workshop performances, Game with Building Blocks, Slat Dance, and Space Dance.

An implied subject in this study is the concept and practice of creative or "performative" writing and as a mode of scholarly research and production. Largely, in the experimental phase, creative-performative writing in contemporary scholarship answers the call for maintaining a sense of the bodily performance/performer in the

written text and advancing the notion of writing as a discursive practice that must recognize the limits and limitations of its form in its formation.

My understanding and application of performative writing concepts and techniques are informed by the six characteristics that Della Pollock discusses in “Performing Writing.” For Pollock, performative research writing tends to be “*evocative*” or highly descriptive (80), “*metonymic*” or “self consciously...incomplete”(82), “*subjective*”(86), “*nervous*” or crafting a ““chain of narratives””(91), “*citational*”(92), and “*consequential*” or aiming to be a “productive force”(94; emphases in original). Although these characteristics are commonplace in the tradition of creative-literary writing, when reconceived as performative and in scholarly writing, the characteristics function to highlight the embodied experience and event-ness of the given subject and, likewise, the experience and constructed event of scholarly research and writing. In my application of these concepts and tools, I aim to highlight an experience and event that was, quite literally, a performance- -i.e., the Bauhaus Stage Workshop performances. Since formal aesthetics determined the subject matter and composition of the Bauhaus performances, it is my hope that the experiential exigency of formal principles and properties are also remembered and refreshed. Lastly, in subjecting my study of the Bauhaus and formal aesthetics to performative writing techniques, I subject performative writing to the aims and challenges of (formal) aesthetics and scholarship. In sum, this study is an experiment in how performance can be expressed or performed in writing and how writing can perform an experience of aesthetic impact.

METHOD

In this study, I use the discourse of formal aesthetics to describe and interpret the subject of formal aesthetics and as applied by the Bauhaus. This discourse is implied in Chapter Four where I offer an historical context for the Bauhaus and proceed to detail its practical and pedagogical aims and curriculum. In Chapter Six, I define and discuss the elements of formal aesthetics, and as both subject and discourse. In brief, formal aesthetics refers to the basic compositional elements that constitute a work of art. They are understood to be rooted in fundamental natural laws (i.e., laws of survival) that, therefore, all human beings respond to in elemental and shared ways. For example, because we have learned that sharp, pointy things can hurt us, we tend to find angles less inviting than curves. Similarly, basic principles and properties inform the conceptual discourse of shapes, colors, and textures as well as various kinds of lines. In Chapters Eight, Ten, and Twelve, I directly apply the language of formal aesthetics to interpret three dances that were part of the repertoire of the Bauhaus Stage Workshop. Although this discourse has been applied in prior analyses of the performances, the applications tend to be cursory, assumed, or negative (see respectively, Goldberg, Wingler, and Dearstyne). Informed by the prior chapters and teamed with performative writing, it is my hope that my use of the discourse proves to be an accessible, sophisticated and dynamic way to articulate the content and interpretive possibilities of these largely visual and abstract performance pieces.

Performative writing is a second and integrated method of inquiry in this study. As discussed in the prior section, my conceptualization and use of performative writing practices are largely based in the six characteristics Pollock discusses in her essay. In

light of the main subjects of my study, however, I have further articulated the characteristics and in terms of the early twentieth century avant-garde and visual images from the Bauhaus Stage Workshop (see Figures 2-4). I use the avant-garde theater ideas of the Futurists as a connecting link and through line from the Bauhaus to performative writing. The futurist manifestos provide a historical link to the themes and concepts being expressed by artists in Europe, and also some of the theatrical principles at play at the Bauhaus. Additionally, the manifestos echo in their content and form, the characteristics laid out by Pollock for performative writing. The futurists called for a theater that was dynamic in its speed, brevity, variety and modern themes; a theater which was unlike anything that preceded it in its content and form that challenged its audience in its multiplicity and speed, which was epitomized in vaudeville, variety shows and the circus. In particular, Pollock's framework of performative writing is set against the Futurist avant-garde ideas of theater in the first and second frames, respectively, of the enclosed graphs in Figures 2-4 creating the juxtapositions: *evocative- atechanical, metonymic-synthetic, subjective- novel, nervous- dynamic/simultaneous, citational-autonomous/allogical/unreal* and *consequential- confident/vivacious*. In the third frame of the enclosed graphs are images drawn from Bauhaus performance photos and costume and theater renderings that visually evoke the performative writing and avant-garde characteristics noted in the other frames. Thus the graphs read both horizontally and vertically to set up the flow of ideas in the conceptualization of both performative writing and Futurist avant-garde theater as illustrated by those documented performance and theatrical images from the Bauhaus Stage Workshop which best articulate the performative-futurist parings.

perfuturehaus formanimage

PERFORMATIVE WRITING FUTURIST THEATRE.....BAUHAUS PHOTOS

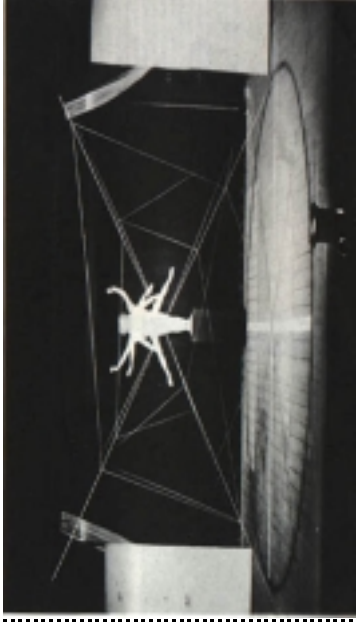
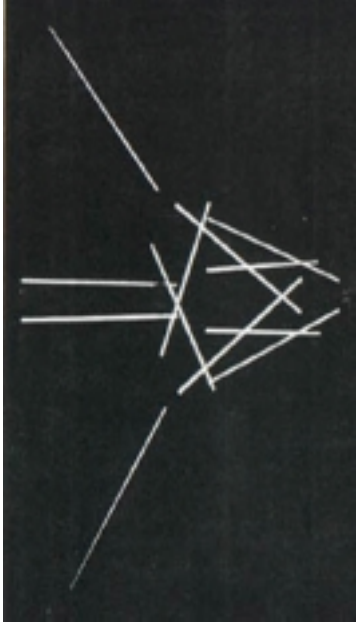
<p>Performative writing is <i>evocative</i> It operates metaphorically to render absence present. (Pollock 80)</p>	<p><i>Atechnical</i> (Marinetti, <u>Marinetti</u> 197)</p> <p>EVERYTHING OF ANY VALUE IS THEATRICAL</p> <p>ITS STUPID TO RENOUNCE THE DYNAMIC LEAP IN THE VOID OF TOTAL CREATION, BEYOND THE RANGE OF TERRITORY PREVIOUSLY EXPLORED. (Marinetti, <u>Marinetti</u> 199)</p>	<p>(Goldberg 105)</p> 
<p>Performative writing is <i>metonymic</i>... a self consciously partial or incomplete rendering.... an <i>enactment</i> of loss. (Pollock 82 and 84)</p>	<p><i>Synthetic.</i></p> <p>That is, very brief. (Marinetti, <u>Marinetti</u> 197)</p>	<p>(Baker 49)</p> 

Figure 2.Perfuturehaus Formanimage Graph One.



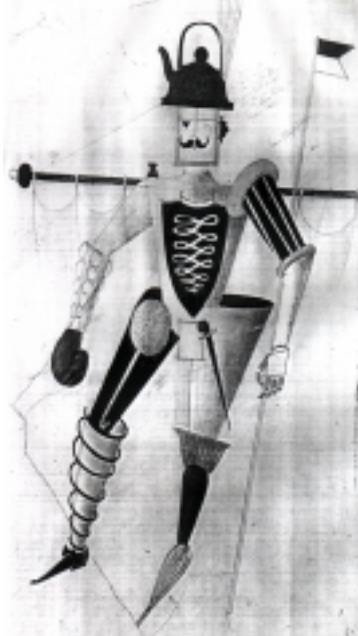
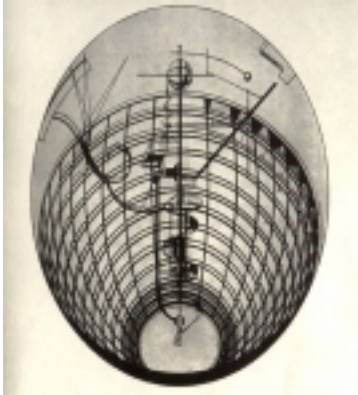
<p>Performative writing is <i>subjective</i>... [It is] the dynamic engagement of a contingent and contiguous (rather than continuous) relation between the writer and his/her subject(s), subject selves, and/or reader(s)...</p> <p>Reworking the self in enunciation. (Pollock 86 and 87)</p>	<p>THE FUTURIST THEATRE IS BORN OF THE TWO MOST VITAL CURRENTS in the Futurist sensibility... which are: (1) our frenzied passion for real, swift, elegant, complicated, muscular, fugitive, Futurist life; (2) our very modern cerebral definition of art according to which no logic, no tradition, no aesthetic, no technique, no opportunity can be imposed on the artists natural talent; he must be preoccupied only with creating synthetic expressions of cerebral energy that have THE ABSOLUTE VALUE OF NOVELTY.(Marinetti, <u>Marinetti</u> 201)</p>	<p>(Schlemmer 32)</p> <p>Oskar Schlemmer als Musikalischer Clown, um 1928</p> 
<p>Performative writing is <i>nervous</i> ... [It is] a chain of narratives sensuously feeding back into the reality thus (dis) enchaind.... [It is] "interpretations" incorporated into history as events. (Pollock 90 and 91)</p>	<p><i>Dynamic, simultaneous.</i></p> <p>That is, born of improvisation, lightning- like intuition, from suggestive and revealing actuality. (Marinetti, <u>Marinetti</u> 199)</p> <p>WE ACHIEVE ABSOLUTE DYNAMISM THROUGH THE INTERPENETRATION OF DIFFERENT ATMOSPHERES AND TIMES (Marinetti, <u>Marinetti</u> 200).</p>	<p>(Droste 102)</p> 

Figure 3. Perfuturhaus Formanimage Graph Two.

<p>Performative writing is <i>citational</i>...that is composed in and as repetition and reiteration...repetition with a <i>difference</i> [and] "pastiche"/"embodied nostalgia." (Pollock 92 and 93)</p>	<p><i>Autonomous, alogical, unreal</i>...[It] will resemble nothing but itself, although it will take elements from reality and combine them as whim dictates. (Marinetti, <u>Marinetti</u> 201)</p>	<p>(Schlemmer 261)</p> 
<p>Performative writing is <i>consequential</i>..."as a <i>productive</i> force, and, most definitely and performatively, as <i>force</i>... [It] operate[s] from within circuitries of reader response. (Pollock 94 and 95)</p>	<p>THROUGH UNBROKEN CONTACT, CREATE BETWEEN US AND THE CROWD A CURRENT OF CONFIDENCE RATHER THAT RESPECTFULNESS, IN ORDER TO INSTILL IN OUR AUDIENCES THE DYNAMIC VIVACITY OF A NEW FUTURIST THEATRICALITY. (Marinetti, <u>Marinetti</u> 202)</p>	<p>(Gropius & Wensinger 89)</p>  <p><i>The Spherical Theater, designed by Andreu Wensinger.</i></p> <p><i>As answer to the question of the space theater, the problem of the theater of the future. — The space stage and the space theater as the basis of the mechanical play. Nature: the point of departure for all primary matter: space, body, line, point, color, light, sound, time; in a new mechanical synthesis (as opposed to the static symbols of antiquity).</i></p> <p><i>A space as architectural structure in place of the customary theater. The spectator on the inner wall of the sphere, but otherwise in a new relationship to space. Nature of their all-encompassing view. Instead of scattered seats, the flat theater is a new profile, optical, mechanical relationship they find their values confirmed with new possibilities for geometry, acoustics, architectural, mechanical space-time phenomena — in order to realize in full complexity, the mechanical theater has taken to the highest developments of technical technology. — Purpose to achieve new through the creative play of new actions of space to create modes of observation to give elementary content to observing spectacles.</i> 6/18.</p>

OK, LET'S SEE HOW THIS
WHEEEEEEE EEEEEEE!

EE

Figure 4. Perfuturhaus Formanimage Graph Three.

One example of how I apply the multi-discursive graph or model for writing is in my use of historical timelines in Chapter Four. Substantively, my aim in this chapter is to provide an historical context for the school and detail its pedagogical mission and curriculum. Like all histories, the history of the Bauhaus is incomplete. Its archive of largely journalistic and photographic-pictorial materials are metonyms, specifically synecdoches, that offer but a partial trace of the Bauhaus experience. Similarly, studies about the Bauhaus cannot help but “absent” the two world wars that frame and influence the rise and fall of the Bauhaus. By using the historical timelines, then, I hope to take advantage of their practical ability to synthesize history; to, in Marinetti’s terms, say a lot in a “very brief” form (Marinetti, Marinetti 197). I also hope to operationalize their creative potential by highlighting the partial history I inevitably construct in this study. In other words, it’s my aim that the metonymic timelines testify to all that they (and I) absent in this study. They are “an *enactment* of loss” (Pollock 84; emphasis in original). On the other hand, just as Calder constructs a novel history of a “bluebird” by reducing it to an abstraction (Figure 1), or Schlemmer preconceives the spatial extensions of the body by reducing it to straight lines (in Slat Dance), so too my metonymic timelines offer novel possibilities given how the reader chooses.

A second example of how I use the model is in Chapter Eight when I “cite” the cadence and rhyme of Dr. Seuss’ poetry in my interpretation of Game with Building Blocks. Dr. Seuss funds my understanding and articulation of this performance because in basic aim, compositional form, and attitude, the two expressions are quite similar. Game with Building Blocks is a playful investigation of the effect of color in space. The game seems to delight in its alogical play with visual principles, drawing largely on

repetition and reconfiguration of color and shape in space. And, it is through the (re) constructive play with colored blocks that the “building blocks” of color theory are disseminated to the audience. Dr. Seuss crafts written language similarly. Due to the repetition and juxtaposition of similar words in new combinations, his nonsense rhymes are proven tools to language acquisition. Dr. Seuss also seems to have learned from the Bauhaus about the effect of color on pictorial composition, in that he uses colors that evoke the written verse. In so citing the poetic vernacular of Dr. Seuss in my writing, I hope to evoke the performance experience and event of Game with Building Blocks and also imply that, in so far as nonsense verse is funded by formal aesthetics, and aims to be educational as well as entertaining, it meets research criteria (in the fine and literary arts and the academy, generally) that are typically used to in fact exclude “nonsense” from serious purview.

At the beginning of Chapters Four, Six, Eight, Ten and Twelve, I offer methodological rationale that is similar to that offered in the above two examples. My aim is to provide the reader with the keys I used to integrate formal aesthetics and performative writing in each discrete chapter.

I do not offer these keys to reading in Chapters Three, Five, Seven, Nine, and Eleven. Rather, my intent is to prompt the reader to produce meanings largely on his or her own. The conceptual basis for these brief chapters lies in Walter Benjamin’s notion of collections and collecting as an activity of selection and juxtaposition. It is the “childlike element” of juxtaposition that “in a collector mingles with the element of old age,” Benjamin writes (61). In other words, it is the inventive placement of items upon and against each other that brings about the “renewal of existence,” or traditions. Children are

especially apt collectors, according to Benjamin, since they integrate hundreds of renewal processes into their collecting, such as “the painting of objects, the cutting out of figures, the application of decals- the whole range of childlike modes of acquisition, from touching things to giving them names” (61).

Likewise, the process and experience of coming to know the Bauhaus was based, quite literally, in discovering items that seemed to me to be Bauhaus-like and juxtaposing them. Thereby, my comprehension and appreciation of formal aesthetics was revitalized.

In these chapters then, I offer a scaled-down version of my collection and the collecting process. The collected items I juxtapose are the visual works, writings and influences of Alexander Calder and excerpts from Donald Barthleme’s short stories. Calder’s sculptures are directly influenced by and operationalize the Bauhaus tradition of inventive play with formal aesthetics while Barthleme’s written works testify to his reflexive interest in and use of formal aesthetics and, of course, creative-performative writing techniques. As noted above, besides this general rationale, I do not analyze the collection further. Instead, I use a simple montage sequence to order the collection and thereby leave the interpretive work-play, the “renewal of existence,” to the reader.

SIGNIFICANCE

I believe this study is important in terms of what it reveals about formal aesthetics and performative writing as integrated subjects and methods of inquiry. My aim is to use the tools of formal aesthetics and performative writing as discursive and interpretive keys to understanding the performance methods and practices of the Bauhaus Stage Workshop. The dances of the Bauhaus Stage Workshop informed my understanding of the dynamic affective powers, both visual and emotional, of formal aesthetics “in action.” I aim to use

that creative impetus as a way to evoke the experience of the Bauhaus Stage Workshop performances. The choice to emphasize an aesthetic understanding of these performances, in turn, prompted the decision to explore the methods and effects of performative writing as both a creative and scholarly means of inquiry and expression. Taken together, my objective is to emphasize how both formal aesthetics and performative writing can aid in the research and methods used to discuss performance.

Formal aesthetics are often criticized for ignoring or denying a certain underlying social or cultural rhetoric seemingly inherent in all works. The Bauhaus, in particular, has been charged with creating with creating an apolitical yet also elitist aesthetic, that both requires an education in formalism and disregards the human being in design. The Bauhaus in fact, based their politics on social-democratic principles of universal expression, access, and comprehension through formal aesthetics; an aesthetics that placed the human being squarely at the center of design needs and expression. The focus of the Bauhaus aesthetic was to create a more democratic mode of production, transmission, and interpretation. Aesthetics was seen as a way to make art more accessible to those wanting to develop a craft. It was viewed as a means of creating works that could be acquired and appreciated by anyone regardless of class. The Bauhaus Stage Workshop explored the effect of form upon the viewer through the visceral and immediate mode of performance, and integrated those lessons back into the theories and practices of the entire Bauhaus. In short, it became the testing ground for discovering how their principles of aesthetics operated on real people in real space.

Of course, there are reductive factors at work in all aesthetics. There are first, the perceptual frameworks for sense making, which filter out a digital order from the

analogous flux of stimulus. In formal aesthetics, universal or elemental associations derive from responses to the primary experience of certain visual stimuli in nature. Finally, these systems of meaning making for all human visual processing acquire a democratic appeal in function and signification.

A problem with formal aesthetics arises when secondary social/cultural codes are imposed upon first order aesthetic forms. Such impositions tend to politicize and polarize aesthetics in a way not consistent with the first order associations. Of course aesthetic elements are used in all compositions but they do not fund the more culturally derived meanings of a work. They may in support or oppose these other systems and codes of meaning but on their own they do not carry such cultural associations. For example, red is primarily associated with fire and blood. Our culture transcribes the color to stand for passion and danger. A recognition of the power and significance of the first order associations of form allows for further manipulation and creative play in design to produce many kinds of meanings, including social, cultural, and personal. In other words, the generalities of formal aesthetic expression allows for a “language” of form that can produce multiple meanings and expressions.

The translation of visual to spoken or written language tends to compound the conceptual difficulties people have with interpreting aesthetic elements. The primary associations of form are not easily transcribed through the learned symbolic associations encoded in verbal and written language acquisition. Formal aesthetics is better understood and expressed through primary, visceral play with its forms. This is a language that crosses boundaries of culture, class and linguistic capacity. Aesthetics is not an elite system of coding but one accessible to all through a shared method of visual

processing. Aesthetics thus becomes a way to create and read works of many kinds, from simple visual constructions to those that rely on other more culturally or textually coded signification.

Additionally, this study uses performative writing as a means of discourse and interpretation of both formal aesthetics and the Bauhaus Stage Workshop. I experiment with the power of performative writing in writing about both performance and visual aesthetics. I try to use the various elements of performative writing as defined by Pollock to establish parallels between these writing models and avant-garde theater, particularly Bauhaus stage images. I examine how performative writing might be used to fund a more sensual, experiential articulation of the bodily experiences associated with comprehension formal aesthetics and performance.

Methodologically, performative writing offers interpretive models for analyzing formal aesthetics and the Bauhaus theater. These models provide particularized methods for investigating and experiencing formal aesthetic principles, and Bauhaus design and performance. These writing formats help to evoke the experiences of visual form and past performance. Performative writing allows me to explore how the aesthetics of print can articulate my research of the Bauhaus and the Stage Workshop and provide groundwork for using and reading formal aesthetics in performance and text compositions.

As I move through the language of formal expression, and in the language of performative play, I strive to outline the impetus of my motion towards an understanding of Bauhaus theories and practices. I am, in a sense, creating a personal scrapbook, a picture book of aesthetics, with which I hope to perform formalism's effect. I call upon the play of aesthetic and performative composition and construction. It is an active and

interactive process which I hope reflects how powerfully affective both modes of expression can be. As with any game, the motivation moves beyond mere pleasure to the aim of teaching something about our relationship to the world. Even the most playful forms of creativity carry within them the seeds of serious inquiry and expression:

Can you define what a picture book is for you?

Well, I think I have; it's everything. It's my battleground. It's where I express myself. It's where I consolidate my powers and put them together in what I hope is a legitimate, viable form that is meaningful to somebody else and not just to me. It's where I work. It's where I put down those fantasies that have been with me all my life, and where I give them a *form* that means something. I live inside the picture book; that's where I fight all my battles, and where I hope to win my wars. (Sendak, Caldecott and Co. 193)

Playing aesthetic games, performing the Bauhaus, creating the effects of both of these upon the page, these are the practices I enact in my desire to create something meaningful out of my experiences and impressions of formal composition in its many manifestations.

CHAPTER SUMMARIES

Chapter One is a manifesto of the forms used in this study. Chapters Three, Five, Seven, Nine and Eleven are brief chapters in which I collect and interpolate the operations of formal aesthetics and performative writing. My collection consists of the visual works and writings of Calder; and select passages from the texts of Donald Barthelme, a performative writer par excellence. Collections composed as montages, leaving the explicit connections between the items and framing chapters to the reader and his or her producerly interpretation of them.

In Chapter Four, I offer a history of the Bauhaus that consists of historical data concerning Germany's socio-political activities between the two world wars, the

Bauhaus' relationship to other avant-garde movements of the era, the history of the school itself, and some extensions of its influences. I construct the proffered history by means of timelines and caption pages. In the second section of the chapter, I introduce the professional, popular and personal discourses of the Bauhaus concerning the mission, curriculum and experiences had there via the construction of a handbook and journal created out of my research and interpretation of the school's history using evocative, citational and subjective principles of performative writing.

In Chapter Six, I offer a "lecture" on aesthetics in which I define the subject and explain the basic elements, principles and properties of line, shape, color, and texture. I also theorize how formal aesthetics asks us to produce and view texts and, in turn, cover the ramifications and limitations of the use of formal aesthetics as a discourse and practice. I provide examples and interactive exercises throughout, combining performative writing and formal aesthetic techniques. This chapter draws on the nature of performative writing as citational, consequential and evocative.

In Chapter Eight, I analyze the Bauhaus stage performance titled Dance with Cubes or (Game with Building Blocks). In the dance-game, the performers arrange multicolored blocks in diverse combinations to show the effect of color on composition. . In my analysis, I describe the dance by using the staging vernacular of "blocking." Then, I interpret the "blocking" (of building blocks) by means of Dr. Seussian poetics and toy block visuals. The reader is provided with literal toy blocks, specifically tangrams, with which s/he is urged to produce his/her own whimsical creations. My aim is to evoke to tell a story by means of citation of Dr. Seuss' poetics and children's games.

Chapter Ten concerns Slat Dance or Song of the Joints. In this dance, the body of the solo performer is articulated by means of white poles that extend from and beyond the primary hinge or movement points of the body—e.g., elbows, knees, neck and back. The dance highlights Schlemmer's notion of the body's dynamic tensions and axes expressed in space. Schlemmer's aim was towards a reduction of the body, brevity in the piece itself and a minimalist clarity of form. To evoke the brevity, I use a series of haiku set against different contrasting black and white images. The poem's emphases in the haiku are also expressed as white lines moving against a black background, in metonymic evocation.

Chapter Twelve covers the Space Dances. These were a series of dances that Schlemmer used to further investigate the coordinates of space through the motions of the human body. The dances progress from a simple spatial grid, delineating the human body in motion to the progressive additions of color, props and, lastly, gesture, as ways to articulate the body's movement in space. I contextualize the dances by means of firsthand accounts and reviews, and my own subjective interpretations, associations, anecdotes, and extensions. In sum, I compare the progressive filling of space with my experiences on the soccer field. The print text of which is also graphically manipulated, in a nervous performative mode, to replicate such "felt volume" of motion in space that Schlemmer describes.

In Chapter Thirteen I summarize the lessons I learned by researching and writing this study. In brief, I evoke the importance of the elemental quality of formal aesthetics and as a center from which much diversity in creative content and meaning can flow. Chapter Fourteen is my postscript, a trace of form once more reflected on the page.

CHAPTER THREE GATHERING STRUCTURES

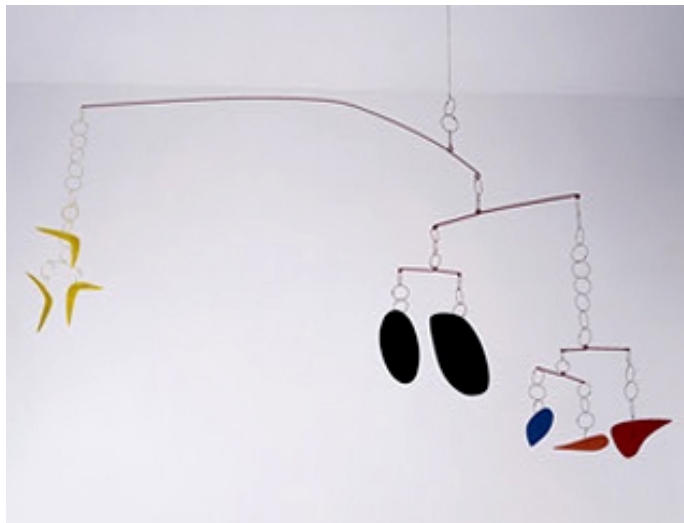
This is my collection of image- my scrapbook of aesthetic detail, from which I hope to comprehend a world of space and motion. The delineations and exponential capabilities of formal elements provide the through lines that connect the dots of my scattered thoughts. I gather together form and theory, and juxtapose them into a field guide for spatial expression and realization. My language is visual, pictorial, playful, and incomplete. My aim is to have a suitcase of memories and wanderings, a decaded keepsake of my journeys; one that will encourage all willing participants to fill it with their own adventure tales. Where my ramblings end, the performance begins:



"The underlying sense of form in my work has been the system of the Universe, or part thereof. For that is a rather large model to work from." (Calder quoted in Baer 491)

Figure 5. Mondrian, Piet. Tableau no. IV, Lozenge Composition with Red, Gray, Blue, Yellow and Black.

It was more or less directly as a result of my visit to Piet Mondrian's studio in 1930, and the sight of all his rectangles of color deployed on the wall, that my first work in the



abstract was based on the concept of stellar relationships. Since then there have been variations from this theme, but I always seem to come back to it, in some form or other. For though the lightness of a pierced or serrated solid or surface is extremely interesting the still greater lack of weight of deployed nuclei is much more so. (Calder, "A Propos Measuring a Mobile" 1; emphasis added)

Figure 6. Calder, Alexander. Boomerangs. 1941.

They called for more structure, then, so we brought in some

big hairy four-by-fours
from the city

and nailed them into place with railroad spikes.

This new city,

they said, was going to be

just jim-dandy,

would make architects stutter, would make Chambers of Commerce burst into flame.

We would have our own witch doctors, and strange gods aplenty,

and site-specific sins,

and humuhumunukunukuapuaa in the public fish bowls.

We workers listened with our mouths agape. We had never heard anything like it.

But we trusted our instincts and our paycheck, so we pressed on, bringing in

color-coated steel

from the back shed and anodized aluminum from the shed behind that.

Oh radiant city!

We said to ourselves, how we want you to be built!

(Barthleme, “They called for more structure...” 7; emphases added)

CHAPTER FOUR

HAUSTORICAL BAUGROUND: HOUSE BUILDING

In this chapter, I offer an historical context for the Bauhaus school and Stage Workshop. I do so in two distinct ways, by means of timelines and journal entries. As I discussed in Chapter Two, I use timelines so as to acknowledge the metonymic or partial effect of all histories, my own included, and also to experiment with the practical operations and creative possibilities of a chronology format.

The content of the timelines includes key events in Germany during each of the world wars; the social and political climate of Germany between the wars; key events in the history of the Bauhaus' avant-garde contemporaries as well as the Bauhaus itself; an overview of Oskar Schlemmer's life history and also the Stage workshop; and evidence of the school's influence and reach beyond its own operation in Germany. Interspersed throughout and juxtaposed against the timelines are quotes by key figures associated with the various histories summarized above. See figures seven through twenty-two below.

In practical terms, the timelines are formatted on transparencies and attached to them are caption pages that provide explanatory or additional information pertinent to the particular timeline. I use the transparencies to illustrate the accumulative effect of the many historical threads that contribute to the history of the Bauhaus. The transparencies are a literal and potentially changing *texture* that the reader may compose, weave, and read in diverse ways. In this way, the timeline transparencies replicate the process and production of histories in general.

In the second section of the chapter, I draw on the literary tradition of the personal journal and scrapbook to provide detailed information regarding the Bauhaus' curricular events and activities, and to evoke the experience of what it might have been like to

attend the school, and specifically between September 1927 and May 1929. The composer of the journal and scrapbook is a new student, namely, “myself.” Interwoven with my personal, imaginary discourse are citations of official documents regarding the Bauhaus’ mission, curriculum, faculty, Stage Workshop, and performance reviews. I also interweave the first-hand accounts of actual students who attended the Bauhaus during this time. The lived experiences significantly constitute and inform the “fictive” account I write. They also personalize and popularize the official record, recalling, for example, specific classroom projects, the Bauhaus parties, and Gropius’ and Schlemmer’s resignations in, respectively, 1928 and 1929.

In general conceptual terms, then, my aim is to “render absence present” (Pollock 80) by “theatrical [izing]” it (Marinetti, Marinetti 197). The journal and scrapbook format effects this dramatic agency by allowing me to investigate the history of the Bauhaus by entering it as a first-person character. Thereby, my subjective relationship to and investment in the Bauhaus are explicitly acknowledged yet in a way that also depersonalizes the subjective stance. That is, the “me/not me” fictive character and the multi-sourced texture of the journal insist that my personal voice be constituted through and in terms of that other subject that interests me. In brief, I historicize myself.

This theoretical method for research writing in general, historiographies in particular, is drawn from Gregory Ulmer’s concept and practice of the “mystory.” In brief, a mystory asks the researcher to compose a multi-sourced text that includes materials from the general domains of professional, popular, and personal discourses. As discussed above, the inclusion of one’s personal discourse functions to acknowledge the subjective involvement of the researcher while the professional and popular discourse

operate to socialize the self by insisting on the “other” histories, experiences, texts, and materials that constitute the subject of inquiry (see: Ulmer).

This chapter then is a history of the Bauhaus made in the (re) telling, (re) constructing, (re) creating of those materials and perspectives that constitute it. On the one hand, the chapter explores the evasive power of history, understanding that which is excluded, or which refuses our attempts to “capture” it, is as compelling as that which we reveal or make present. On the other hand, the chapter celebrates the evocative power of language to remember and imagine the lived experiences of those who make history (-ies).

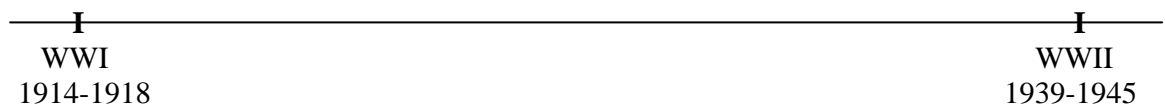


Figure 7. Timeline One.

The German Empire was young in 1914. It came into being following a series of wars in 1871 (“The Great War: Maps and Locations”).

June 28, 1914: The assassination of Archduke Francis Ferdinand of Austria-Hungary by a Serbian nationalist precipitates the Great War (“World War I” 2).

April 22, 1915: Germans use chlorine gas against the Allies in the second battle at Ypres (Winter). In Germany, leaders of the International Socialists (Spartacists) demonstrate against the war on May 1, 1916 (“Germany During World War One” 9).

January 1917: Germany reinstated unrestricted submarine warfare against British shipping, which led to the United States breaking off relations with Germany on February 1917, and entering the war on April 6 (“From America’s Entry to allied Victory”).

On October 28, 1918 German sailors mutinied against an impending suicide mission on the British fleet. “In three days time the revolution had spread all across Germany” (“Germany During World War One” 9).

The German republic of Weimar was founded November 10, 1918.

“At eleven o’clock on the eleventh day of the eleventh month of 1918, the war ends as Germany and Allies sign an Armistice” (The Great War: Interactive Timeline, 1918).

Germany was required to make extensive financial reparations, lost prewar territories, “was unilaterally disarmed and forced to accept an Allied military occupation of the Rhineland and to give up its colonial empire...(and) was forced to accept responsibility for the outbreak of the war” (“World War I” 9, emphases added).

Total losses include: “About 10 million dead and 20 million wounded is a conservative estimate. Starvation and epidemics raised the total in the immediate postwar years. Warfare itself had been revolutionized by the conflict (see air forces; chemical warfare; mechanized warfare; tank)” (“Aftermath and Reckoning”, emphases in original).

World War II began on Sept. 1, 1939, when Germany, without a declaration of war, invaded Poland (“Causes and Outbreak”).

In the summer of 1941, Hitler initiates the “Final Solution”, the culmination of anti-Semitic policies practiced by the Nazi’s starting with a denial of basic civil rights and culminating with a systematic extermination of Jews during the next 4 years (“Final Solution”).

“In 1942, the Allied bombings of Germany had begun, and by 1943 the Allies were bombing German cities.” Also in 1942, rebel German groups united for “Operation Valkyrie,” in an effort to eliminate Hitler and establish a Socialist government. They made two attempts on Hitler’s life in March of 1943 and tried to bomb him at a conference at his headquarters on July 20, 1944 (“Germany During World War II”).

“By the beginning of 1944 air warfare had turned overwhelmingly in favor of the Allies, who wrought unprecedented destruction on many German cities and on transport and industries throughout German-held Europe.” German forces cleared from France and Belgium by October 1944, after the June 6 landing at Normandy.

March 7, 1945: Western allies crossed the Rhine into West Germany. Germany collapses with the meeting of Eastern and Western fronts in Saxony (“Allied Victory in Europe”).

On April 30, 1945 at 3:30 Hitler shot himself, effectively ending the war and Nazi party power (“Germany During World War II”).

May 7: Unconditional German surrender ratified May 8 in Berlin (“Allied Victory in Europe”).

Germany: 3.5 million military and 3.8 million civilian deaths [“The human cost, not including more than 5 million Jews killed in the Holocaust who were indirect victims of the war, is estimated to have been 55 million dead—25 million of those military and 30 million civilian.”]; spent \$272 billion [total cost \$1 trillion] (“World War II” 7, emphases added).

Figure 8. Caption for Timeline One.

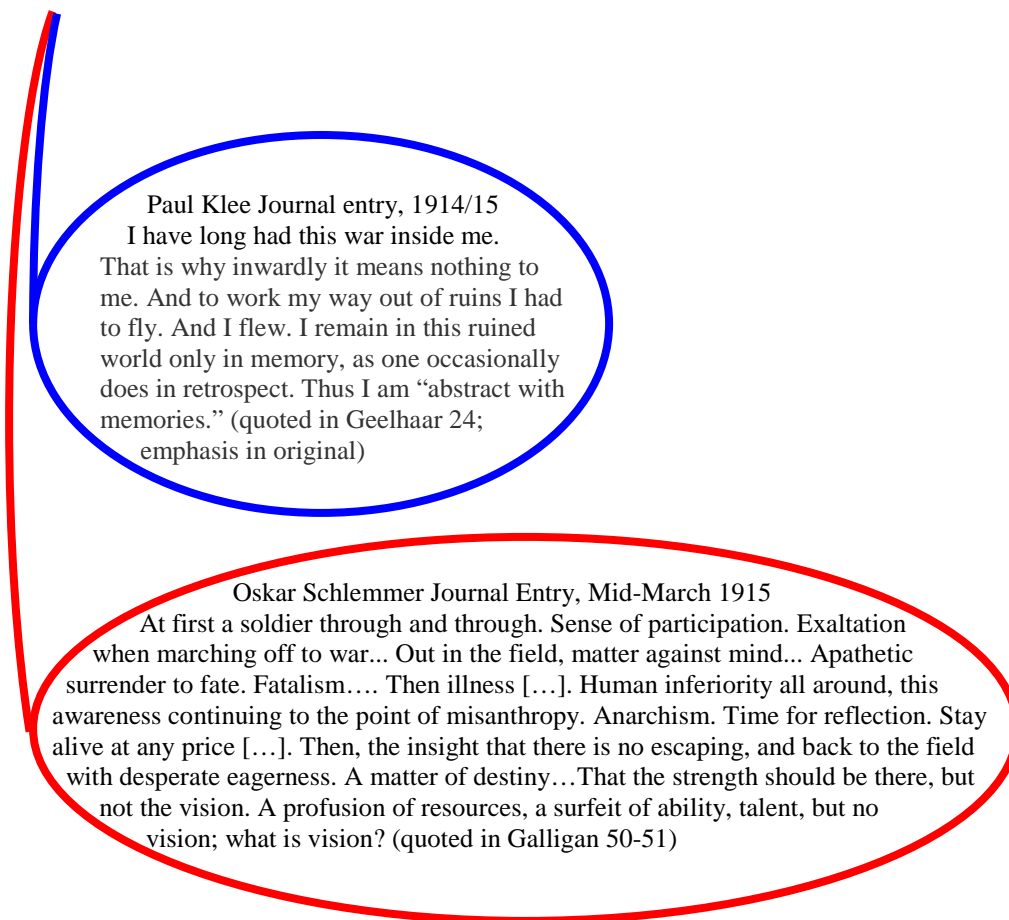


Figure 9. Timeline Two.

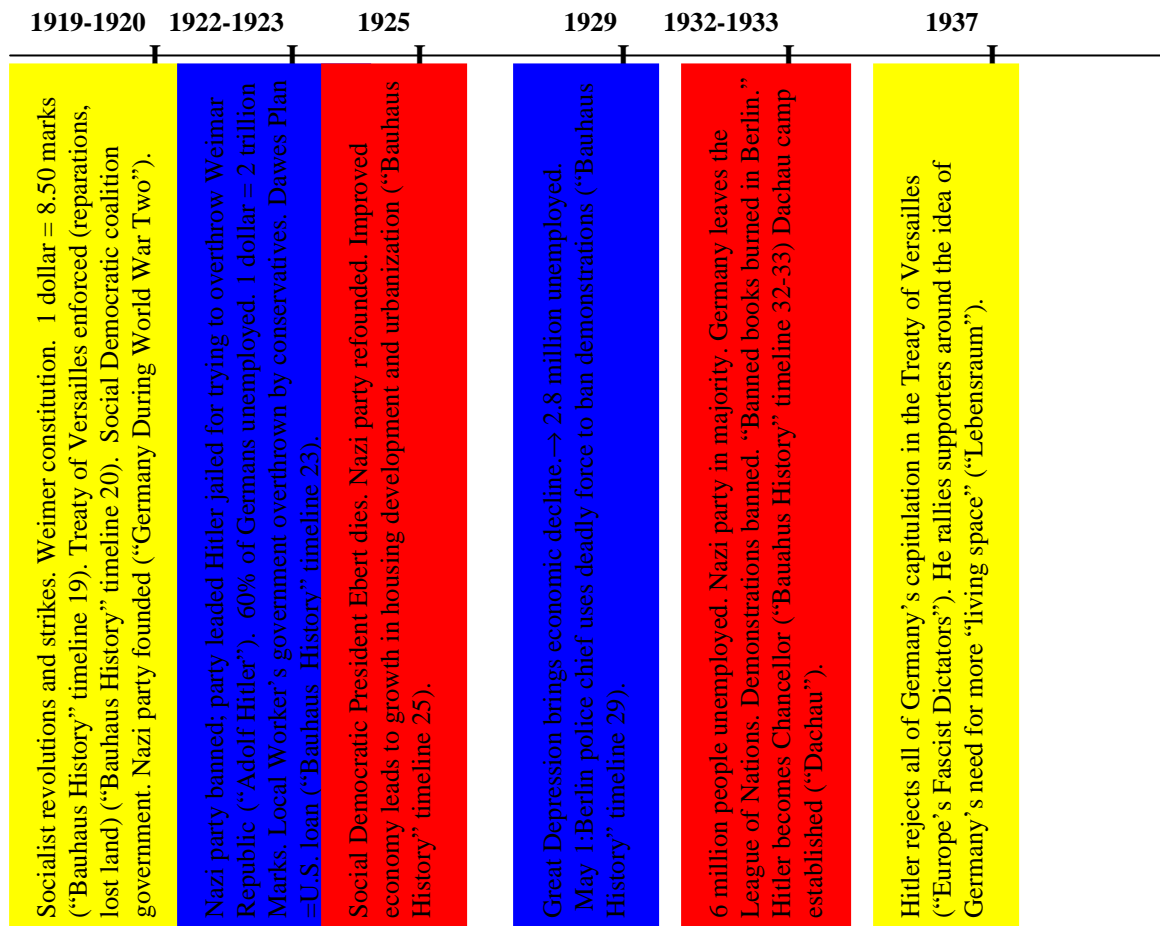


Figure 10. Timeline Three.

1919-1920	Under the direction of architect, Walter Gropius, the Bauhaus becomes a state-sponsored institution of the Free State of Saxony-Weimar, replacing the more traditional School of Arts and Crafts and the Academy of Fine Arts. German Nationalists in Weimar consider the Bauhaus dangerous for its seemed Communist and Bolshevik underpinnings, going so far as to publish a polemic against the school ("Bauhaus History" timeline 19).
1922-1923	Local government wants an exhibition of the Bauhaus' achievements. Regional right wing politicians fault the Bauhaus' organization and management. The school is defended by the Education Minister ("Bauhaus History" timelines 22-23).
1925	Since the Conservative takeover of the regional government in 1924, the Bauhaus is under increasing threat of closure, beginning with the termination of contracts by the end of the year. The Bauhaus takes a proactive approach and tells the government they are leaving. After some courting, the government officials of Dessau offer to make the Bauhaus a municipal school and provide for a new building of Gropius' design. The school becomes more involved with local industry ("bauhaus 1919-33").
1929	Bauhaus' masters have their contracts extended for another 5 years by a slight majority in the Dessau government. Bauhaus' students are becoming more politically active in light of the latest recession and increased totalitarian activity; many participate in Communist groups ("Bauhaus History" timeline 29).
1932-1933	The local council, now headed by Nazi party members, decides to close the Bauhaus and dismiss all teachers, despite student petitions. The Bauhaus is prohibited from using its lower case type font. The Bauhaus is moved to Berlin as a private school. The Bauhaus is searched by the SS and dissolved soon after ("Bauhaus History" timelines 32-33). The Arierparagraph ("Aryan clause") of April 7, 1933 prohibits "non-Aryan" from participating in German schools and other organizations ("Anti-Jewish Legislation").
1937	The Nazis hold a state-sponsored exhibit entitled "Degenerate Art" which features many of the former Bauhaus masters, including Oskar Schlemmer, Paul Klee, and Wassily Kandinsky ("Degenerate Art").

Figure 11. Caption for Timeline Three.

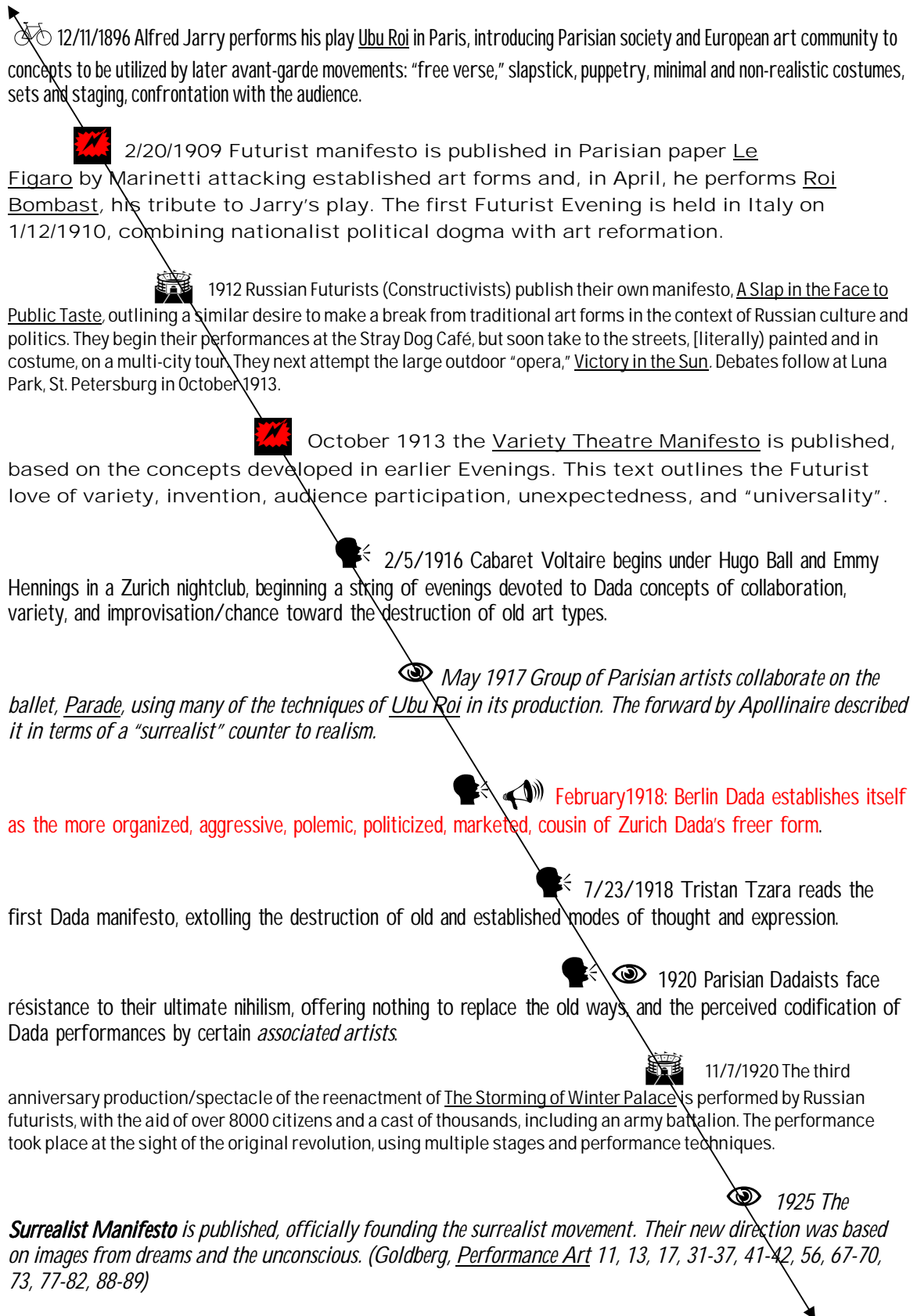


Figure 12. Timeline Four.

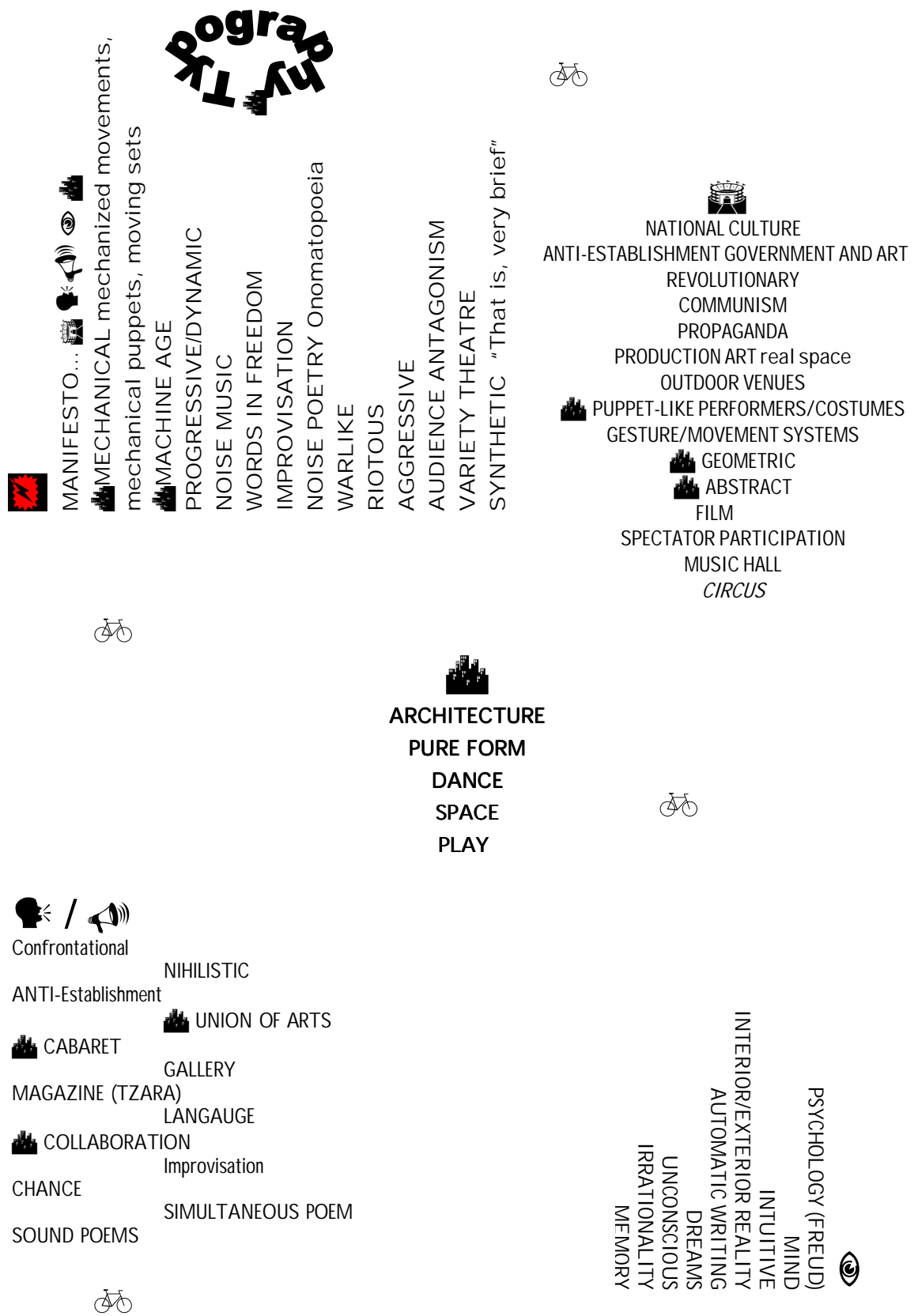


Figure 13. Caption for Timeline Four.

Bo-beh-oh-bee is the lipsong
Veh-eh-oh-mee is the eyesong
Pee-eh-eh-oh is the eyebrowsong
Lee-eh-eh-ay is the looksong

(Khlebnikov)

Gzee-gzee-gzeh-oh is the chainsong
On the canvas of such correspondences
somewhere beyond all dimensions
the face has a life of its own.

Sculpted meat

Example: to prepare *Alaskan Salmon in the rays of the sun with Mars sauce*, take a good Alaskan salmon, slice it and put the slices under the grill with pepper, salt and high quality oil until golden. Then add halved-tomatoes previously cooked under the grill with parsley and garlic.

Just before serving place on top of the slices some anchovy fillets interlaced in a chequerboard pattern. On every slice a wheel of lemon with capers. The sauce will be composed of anchovies, hard-boiled egg yolks, basil, olive oil and a little glass of Italian Aurum liqueur, all passed through a sieve. (Formula by Bulgheroni, head chef at the Penna d'Oca).

The invention of appetizing food sculptures, whose original harmony of form and colour feeds the eyes and excites the imagination before it tempts the lips.

Example: the *Sculpted meat* created by the Futurist painter Fillia, a symbolic interpretation of all the varied landscapes of Italy, is composed of a large cylindrical rissole of minced veal stuffed with eleven different kinds of cooked green vegetables and roasted. This cylinder, standing upright in the centre of the plate, is crowned by a layer of honey and supported at the base by a ring of sausages resting on three golden spheres of chicken. (Marinetti, "Manifesto of Futurist Cooking")

DADA is a **virgin microbe**

DADA is against the **high** cost of living

DADA limited company for the **exploitation** of ideas

DADA has **391** different attitudes and **colours**

according to the **sex** of the president

It changes -- affirms -- says the opposite at the same time --

no importance -- **shouts** -- goes fishing.

Dada is the chameleon of rapid and **self-interested** change.

Dada is **against** the future. Dada is **dead**.

Dada is **absurd**. Long live Dada.

Dada is **not** a literary school, **howl**. (Tzara, emphases in original)

Figure 14. Timeline Five.

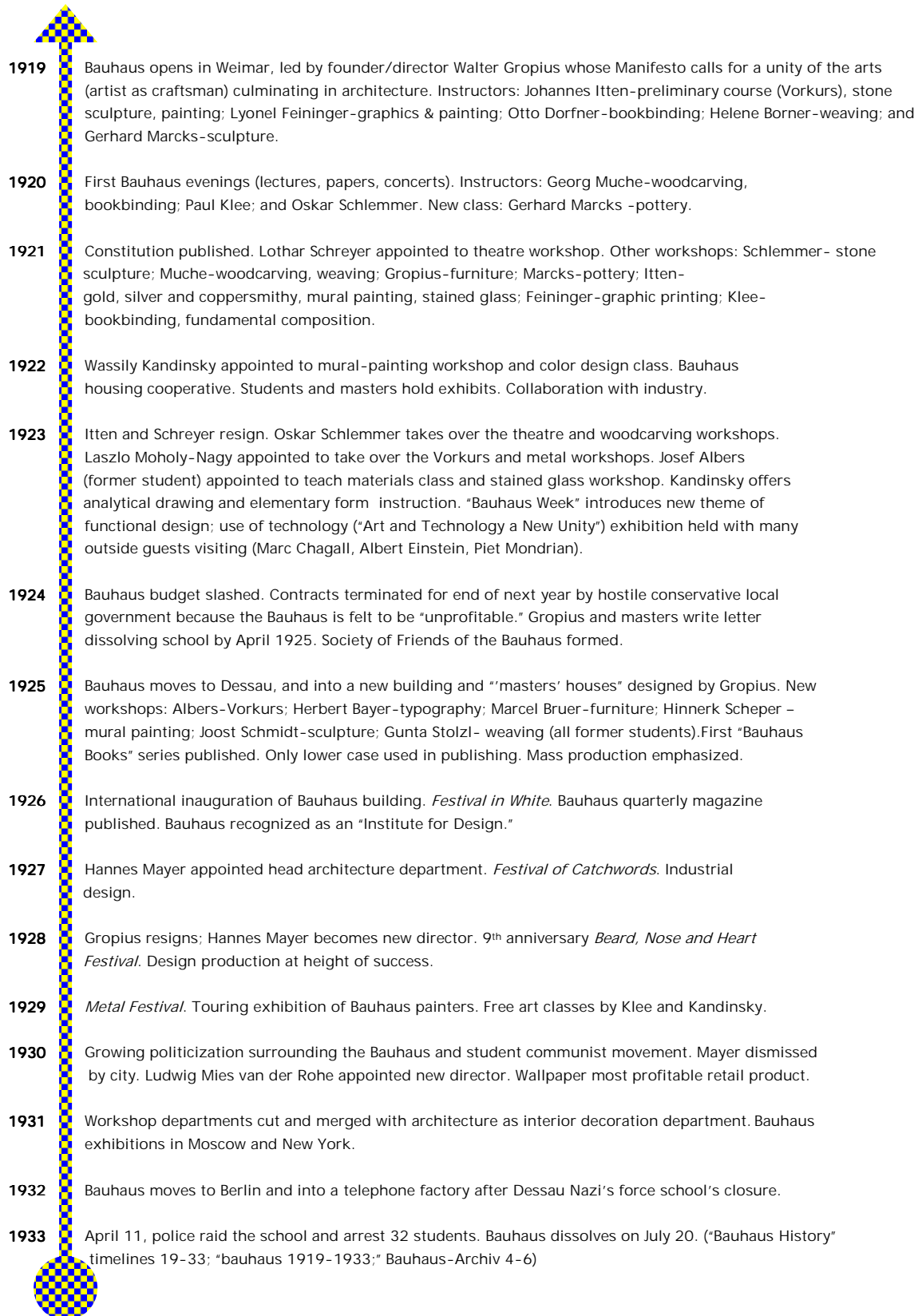


Figure 15. Timeline Six.

Who? Bauhaus' masters: Feininger, Kandinsky, Klee, Moholy-Nagy, Muche, and Schlemmer.

What? "1924 18/V" portfolio for Walter Gropius' 41st birthday and the Bauhaus' 5th anniversary.

Where? Bauhaus Weimar during local political upheaval and impending demise of school there.

When? May 18, 1924.

How? Variations on a newspaper photograph, taken by John Gaudenz, of a crowd listening to the May 4, 1924 election results over the radio.

Why? Variety of artistic styles of masters. Politics. Mass media. Homage to Gropius. Solidarity to Bauhaus.



Paul Klee



Oskar Schlemmer



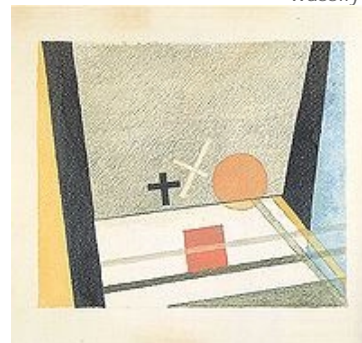
Lyonel Feininger



Wassily Kandinsky



Georg Muche



László Moholy-Nagy

Klee: straight red arrow amid curved forms, complementary red and green

Schlemmer: diagram, technical drawing, anatomy, unifying equation

Feininger: irony, playful, moonlight marine steamboat

Kandinsky: color, form and force of yellow triangle on diagonal

Muche: Multiple colored and black circles approach the skewed cube

Moholy-Nagy: Constructivist composition, diagonals, unstable frame, square, circle, black and white crosses (Droste 114-117)

Figure 16. Caption for Timeline Six.

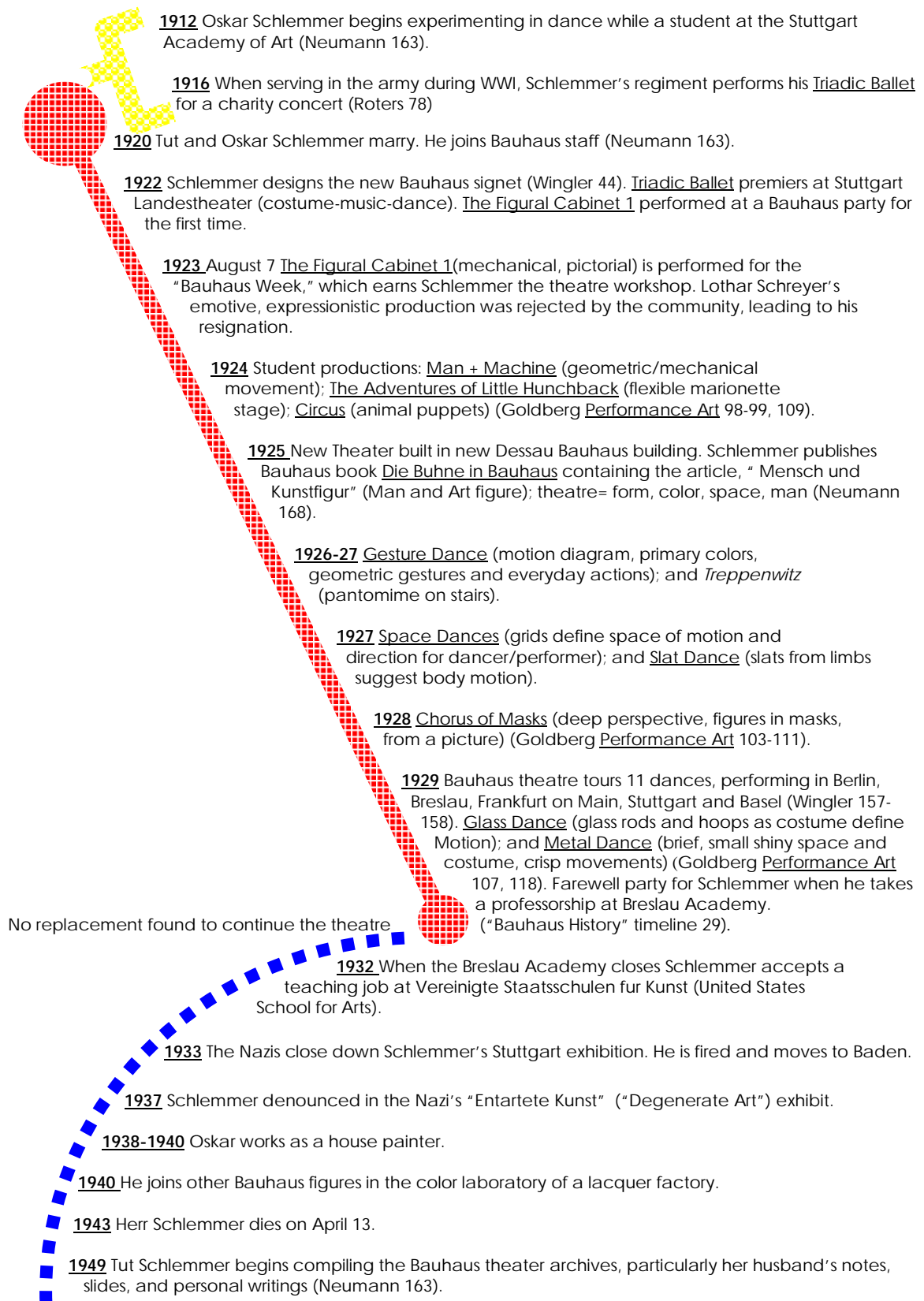


Figure 17. Timeline Seven.

Oskar Schlemmer diary entry February 1929

A children's slide covered in white sheet metal led one past innumerable gleaming silver balls, lined up and sparkling under spotlights, right into the heart of the party, but first one had to pass a tinsmith's shop. Here the need for every sort of metal could be filled; there were wrenches, tin cutters, can openers! A stairway, of which every step gave out a different tone, a true "backstairs joke" (in the course of the evening there emerged virtuosi of stair-climbing), led to the tombola; here one could not, to be sure, win folding metal houses and "living machines," but things almost as good: steel chairs, nickel bowls, aluminum lamps, lovely cakes with a bit of glitter, and natural and unnatural art. But then on to the realm of true metallic pleasure. Bent sheets of foil glittered and reflected the dancers in distortion, walls of silvered masks and their grotesque shadows,

studded
brass fruit
everywhere
paper and
Christmas-
of

The
had dressed
coquettish
and it
music
rhythm
stage,

Schlemmer, 1928: "I have now pronounced the death sentence for theatre at the Bauhaus. And in fact the City Council has issued a publicly read decree forbidding parties at the Bauhaus, including for good measure our next party, which would have been a lovely one." (quoted in Goldberg "Oskar Schlemmer's Performance Art" 37)

ceilings
with gleaming
bowls,
coloured metallic
the ever-beautiful
tree balls, some
enormous size.
Bauhaus band
festively in
silver top hats,
launched into the
with great *élan*,
and verve. On the
bolts of

foolishness dropped from leaden tongues; there was an amusing "ladies dance" performed by men, and a sketch in which, to be sure, metal was represented only by the spike of a helmet; these two numbers satisfied everyone's desire to laugh and look...

The Bauhaus looked lovely from the outside, radiating into the winter night. The windows were pasted on the inside with metallic paper; the white and coloured light bulbs were concentrated according to room. The great block of glass permitted long vista; and thus for one night this house of work was transformed into the "high academy for creative form." (quoted in Whitford 278; emphases in original)

Figure 18. Caption for Timeline Seven.

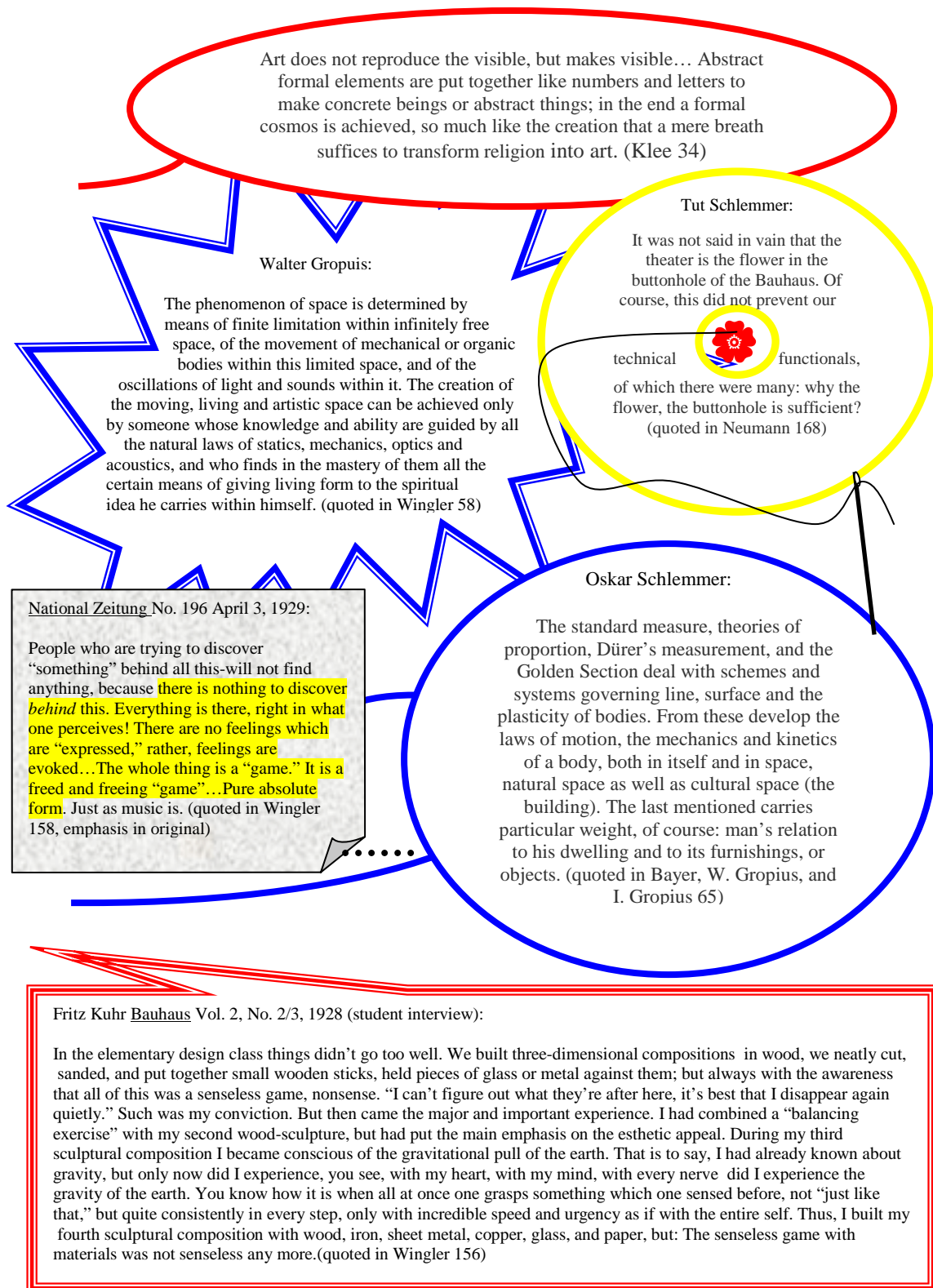


Figure 19.Timeline Eight.

[...] the real difficulty in properly assessing the Bauhaus is directly related to the survivors themselves; these are the teachers and students who have provided the information concerning the school and have thus, in a very real sense, written the history. [...]

While these often highly personal and subjective documents offer a wealth of information concerning the school, they also assist in perpetuating both the myth of the “golden twenties” and the “Bauhaus mystique”. [...]

Diaries and memoirs-the subjective documents that contribute to the proliferation of the “Bauhaus mystique”-must thus serve as major sources, despite the vagueness that inevitably results from the lapse of twenty or thirty years. The researcher must attempt to separate the subjective from the objective, the trivial from the significant, to salvage the value of such material. [...]

The subjunctive mood is not a particularly valid form of critical inquiry and study; the historian or researcher is primarily concerned with the facts available and not necessarily with what could or would have happened *if* a specific event had taken place. (House 17-18, 34, and 233-234)

Figure 20. Caption for Timeline Eight.

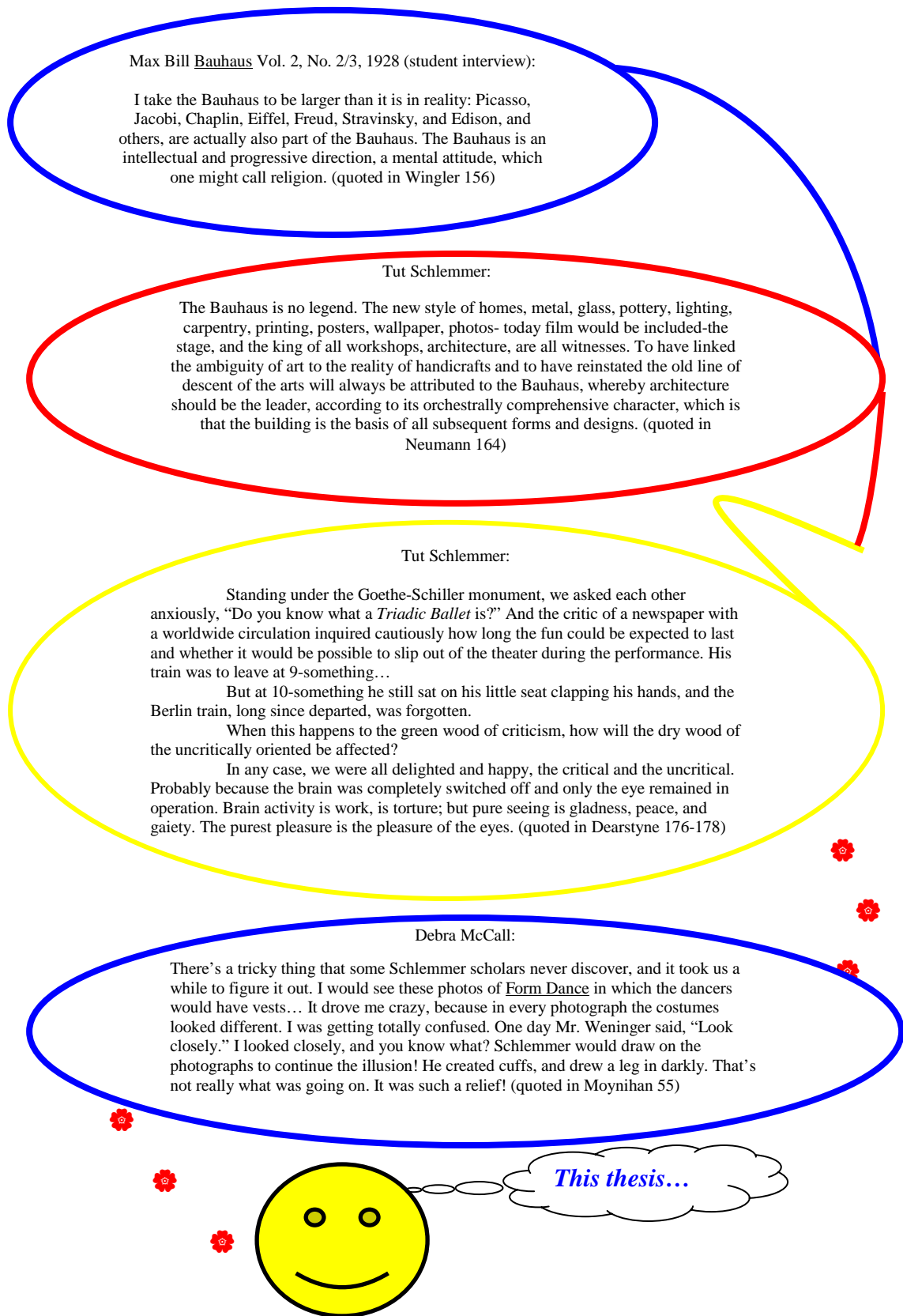


Figure 21. Timeline Nine.



Lisa enters the Bauhaus at Dessau, September 1927

Figure 22. Timeline Ten.

September 19, 1927

Today marks my first day at the Bauhaus!

I arrive in *Dessau* at dawn. Fog hangs over the city. Our headlights occasionally penetrate the damp air. But the eye is drawn to a dazzling beam of light. A *giant light cube*: the new Bauhaus building. Later, with sunshine and blue sky, the building remains a focal point of lightness and brightness. Glass, glass and more glass, radiating dazzling white light from every wall. I have never seen such a light reflector. And the *weight of the walls is neutralized* by two factors, namely the high glass walls openly revealing the light steel structure of the building and the radiating whiteness... The huge complex creates a special, almost unforgettable impression *by night*, [...] creating a cube of light which was delineated in all its transparency by the iron grid of its exterior structure. (quoted in Droste, 122; emphases in original)

So went the day, my orientation revolving in and around this light cube, my aesthetic desires intrigued and excited by the sight. I attempted to express this feeling of clarity to my new classmates, Max and Fritz, but I'm afraid my German is a bit rusty still. I have a feeling of excitement and creative energy here. I am encouraged by the presence of so many women on campus, although I was a little surprised when Fritz introduced me to Max as a "girl-student" (quoted in Wingler 156). Perhaps this is another translation problem....

Enough ruminating! I must look through all the information in my student handbook and get some sleep before tomorrow's meetings with the faculty.

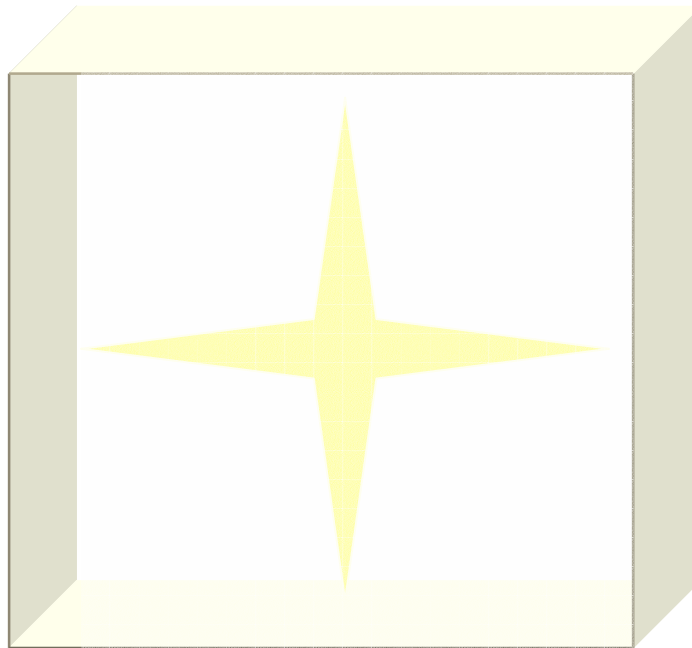


Figure 23. My "Light Cube" Rendition.

bauhaus

t

u

handbook

e

n

t

fall semester / 1927

young people of all lands come to the Bauhaus. (quoted in Neumann 168)

Bauhaus Manifesto – 1919

The ultimate goal of all art is the building! To embellish buildings was once the primary task of the fine arts. They were considered inseparable parts of the great art of building. Today, they exist in complacent isolation, from which they can only be rescued by the conscious, cooperative effort of all craftsmen. Architects, painters and sculptors must relearn to perceive and understand the composite character of a building both as a totality and in terms of its parts-then their work will be imbued again with the spirit of architecture which it had lost in salon art.

The old schools of art were incapable of producing such unity. How could they have done so since art is not teachable. They must re-emerge with the workshop. This world of pattern designers and industrial artists who confine themselves to drawing and painting must at long last again become a world that builds. If young people who feel love for creative work begin their careers by learning a trade, as in the past, the “unproductive artist” will no longer remain condemned to deficient artistry because his skill will now be preserved for the crafts in which he will be able to achieve excellence.

Architects, sculptors, painters – we must all return to the crafts! For there is no such thing as “art by profession.” There is no essential difference between the artist and the craftsman. The artist is an exalted craftsman. In rare moments of illumination beyond the control of his will, transcending his consciousness, heavenly grace may cause his work to blossom into art, but proficiency in his craft is indispensable to every artist. It is the prime source of creative designing.

So let us therefore create a new guild of craftsmen without the presumptuous class segregation that tried to raise an arrogant barrier between craftsmen and artists! Let us strive for, conceive and create the new building of the future, which will be everything in one single shape, architecture and sculpture and painting, and which will one day rise toward heaven from the hands of millions of craftsmen as a crystal symbol of a new, coming faith. (Bauhaus-Archiv 3; emphasis in original)

light cube

Principles of Bauhaus Production by Walter Gropius -1925

"The Bauhaus wants to serve the development of modern housing – from the simplest household appliance to the finished dwelling. Convinced that household appliances and furnishings must be rationally related to each other, the Bauhaus, through systematic research work in theory and practice and under formal, technical and economic aspects, seeks to derive the design of an object from its natural functions and conditions.

An object is defined by its nature. In order, then, to design it to function properly – a vessel, a chair, a house – one must first of all study its nature; for it is expected to serve its purpose perfectly: it must fulfill its function in a practical way, be durable, inexpensive and 'beautiful.'

It is only through constant contact with advancing technology, with the discovery of new materials and new ways of putting things together that the creative individual can learn to establish a living relationship between the present time and tradition and thus develop a new approach to design:

- Resolute affirmation of the living environment of machines and vehicles.
- Organic designing of objects in keeping with their own present-day laws, without any romantic gloss or fanciful frills.
- Limitation to typical primary forms and colours that everyone can understand.
- Simplicity in multiplicity, economical utilization of space, material, time and money.

The creation of prototypes of objects for everyday practical use is a social necessity. The needs of the majority of people are, on principle, similar. The home and its furnishings are matters of mass demand, and their design is more a matter of reason than a matter of passion.

The Bauhaus workshops are essentially laboratories in which prototypes of products suitable for mass production and typical of our time are carefully developed and continually improved. In these laboratories, the Bauhaus wants to train and educate a new type of worker for industry and the crafts who has an equal command of both technology and form." (quoted in Bauhaus-Archiv 7; emphasis in original)

WORKSHOPS:

Typography- Students learn to set their own designs using a sans-serif script of all sizes. The workshop has both a platen press and a rotary proof press. Experimentation is encouraged in printing together, overprinting and compositions with large wooden type, including the use of photos and typographical materials (points, rules, etc.). An increased emphasis is being placed on advertising psychology in graphic design. We produce all printed materials for various Bauhaus purposes. (Droste 148, 151)

Sculpture- Students learn to work in wood and stone, as well as newer materials. Studies in composition and lighting effects will be performed in relation to sculptural compositions. The use of photography is encouraged to explore distortion, reflection and rotation in three-dimensional bodies. (Droste 156)

Weaving - Students study all aspects of textile design, beginning with artistic renderings of textiles before production. They will learn methods in both natural and chemical dyeing techniques. Attention will be on the development of textiles for everyday use, including new stretchable materials with cellophane and sturdy iron cloth. Advanced students may take independent studies in the use of Jacquard looms or complex weaving techniques. (Bauhaus-Archiv 14)

Furniture - Students experiment with creating prototypes for industrial production of both home and office furnishings. They will use a variety of materials, from wood to the newest tubular steels. Emphasis is on standardization, functionality and clean lines of form. (Bauhaus-Archiv 15)

Metal -The metal workshop strives for a functional rationale behind all its design concepts. The workshop is equipped with the latest machinery to aid in production of a variety of vessels and appliances. In our "laboratory," we have achieved strong success and marketability through our various lamp series. (Bauhaus-Archiv 16; emphasis in original)

Stage - The Bauhaus stage focuses on issues of modern dance theatre, specifically the mathematics and geometry of the human body in space. We choreograph and improvise our visual experiments in form and colour on our new experimental stage space. Our work covers a wide range of topics including: masks, costumes and props; mechanical, visual and acoustic conditions of stagecraft; stage design; movement and acting; and stage management. We occasionally take our productions on tour and always partake in Bauhaus design and theme parties. (Bauhaus-Archiv 17)

Wall-painting – The wall-painting workshop uses color to emphasize the structural elements of a room's architecture. Our emphasis is on the spatial effects of colour. We teach students how to prepare comprehensive colour charts, as well as shading techniques such as spraying and screening. (Bauhaus-Archiv 18)

Building Instruction – Beginning this semester, we are proud to include our first official class in architecture. Our course will emphasize a scientific foundation to the teaching of architecture, with priority on the practical functioning of a building and a regard for all necessities of life, over artistic considerations. Teaching methods will be based on real tasks, a practical training as opposed to hypothetical projects. We will base our practicum on projects procured with organizations within the community. We will also enlist outside architects to teach on modern themes such as city planning, mixed development communities, and types of housing options and organization. (Bauhaus-Archiv 20)

Curriculum

Purpose:

1. a thorough craft, technical, and formal training for artistically talented individuals with the aim of collaboration in building.
2. practical research into problems of house construction and furnishing.
3. development of standard prototypes for industry and the crafts.

Areas of instruction:

1. Practical instruction, in workshop of choice
Supplementary areas of instruction:
study of materials and tools
rudiments of bookkeeping, cost estimating, and contract law
2. Form instruction (practical and theoretical)
 - a. **perception**
science of materials
study of nature
 - b. **representation**
study of geometric projection
study of construction
technical draftsmanship and building of models for all three-dimensional structures
designing
 - c. design
study of space
study of color
Supplementary areas of instruction:
lectures in the areas of art and science

Sequence of instruction:

1. Preliminary course
Duration: 2 semesters. Elementary form instruction in connection with practical exercises in the special workshop for basic instruction. During the second semester trial admission into one of the teaching workshops. Result: final admission.
2. General course
workshop training in one of the workshops under a legal apprenticeship agreement. Supplementary form instruction (including preparatory instruction in architecture; see Areas of instruction, 2.b.). Duration: generally 6 semesters (official regulations). Result: journeyman's certificate of the Handwerkskammer. Qualification for admission to courses in building. Where applicable, certificate of studies at the Bauhaus and qualification for transfer into the practical research departments, if transfer into private practice is not chosen.

3. Architectural training
preparation for the practice of architecture for those who show talent. Training in the architectural design office, in conjunction with actual building projects as possible. Building construction (steel, concrete), architectural statistics, building of models, and supplementary technical subjects. Duration: 3 semesters, with interruptions where necessary. Result: certificate of competence from the Bauhaus.

Practical research Departments

for economical, utilitarian prototypes, and work for industry and the crafts, particularly for home building and furnishing. After a minimum of one year of successful work in the research department, the Bauhaus awards a certificate. (Wingler 107-108)

Work Plan for the Preliminary Course

Purpose:

Introduction to the theory and the work of the Bauhaus through knowledge of the principles of form, material, and production. Guidance in its practical utilization.

Areas of Instruction:

1. Practical instruction
 - practical exercises
 - draftsmanship and projection drawing
2. Form instruction
 - study of nature
 - study of the elements of form
 - design
3. Scientific subjects
 - mathematics, mechanics, physics, chemistry

Sequence of instruction:

Theory and practice are closely interrelated.

1. Practical instruction
 - Acquaintance with various types of materials and tools.
 - Devise and build useful objects in the special workshop for the basic course. Compose original designs and justify them with respect to the choice of material, economy, and technique.
 - Independent execution of designs. Mutual criticism of the finished product with respect to its function and expressiveness, and the possibilities for improvements, with respect to form (scale, material, color), material (quantity, value), economy (expenditure, return), and techniques (construction, production). Collect and systematically tabulate samples of materials. Guided tours through workshops and plants. Projection and draftsmanship constitute an introduction to the specialized graphic art of the general course.
2. Basic form instruction
 - Analysis of the elements of form (orientation, designation, and terminology). Organic and functional relationships (principles, construction, structure). Introduction to the principles of abstraction (appearance, nature, scheme). Primary and secondary, elementary and mixed application of the means of design. Design exercises in drawing, painting, and building.
3. Scientific subjects
 - Basic laws of mathematics, physics, mechanics, and chemistry with respect to their practical application and to the logical understanding of the significance of numbers and measurements, substances and

form, force and motion, proportion and rhythm for the processes of design.

The basic course is the indispensable prerequisite for all further work at the Bauhaus and therefore is compulsory for every newly admitted student.

Duration:

Form instruction, two semesters. Practical instruction, one semester. Thereafter, the student may be admitted to one of the teaching workshops.

Result:

Selection of special field according to personal inclination and talent, through increased understanding of personal relationship to the various materials and fields of work. In case of satisfactory achievement, final admission and transfer to the general course of instruction. (Wingler 109)

Bauhaus Faculty

Director: Walter Gropius

Council of Masters (* denotes Junior Master):

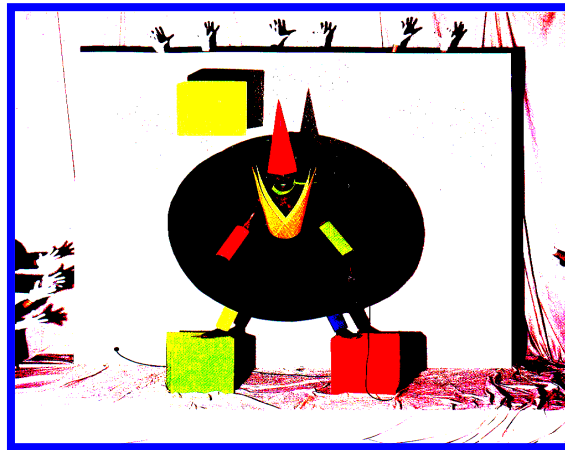
Joseph Albers *	<i>Vokurs</i> practical materials instruction
Herbert Bayer*	typography workshop
Marcel Breuer*	furniture workshop
Wassily Kandinsky	analytical drawing; elementary form instruction; free painting classes
Paul Klee	fundamentals of design; free painting classes
Hannes Meyer	head of architecture department
Laszlo Moholy-Nagy	<i>Vokurs</i> theoretical expression; composition and spatial studies; metal workshop
Hennerk Scheper*	wall-painting workshop
Oskar Schlemmer	stage workshop
Joost Schmidt *	sculpture workshop
Gunta Stolz *	weaving workshop

The Bauhaus Stage Workshop
A Message from Professor Oskar Schlemmer

Dear Student:

Since you have chosen to pick up this brochure, I assume that you may have an interest in the stage for either an extracurricular activity or as a workshop option for your intended area of study. I wanted to take this opportunity to let you know a little about our program and stage. First of all, we welcome all interested students to participate in our activities, including, performances for the rest of the school, designing costumes, scenery and themes for the Bauhaus' many parties and festivals (starting with the upcoming Festival of Kites), and even shows we take on the road. You are also welcome to schedule any of our specific workshops and lecture classes, if you have the time and interest.

For those of you hoping to make theatre your area of concentration, you with some focus. Our intended as particular contemporary as a general fundamental Space, form, music, etc. The on the stage



I want to provide details on our program "is not training for any branch of the theatre but rather study of phenomena: color, light, sound, movement, time, studies take place for several reasons:

(in Fiedler and Feierabend 551)

Figure 24. Bauhaus Principles in Performance.

It is by nature a place of illusion; it is well suited for representation of the sensibilities of today and for training in the recognition of conscious and visual order; and it is an excellent laboratory for the investigation and illustration of all these elements. The method of study is through active participation and experimentation, improvisation, self-education in mobility on the stage, and presentation to the college of the conclusions arrived at" (Schawinsky 44).

If you would like more information on our program or any upcoming events, please stop by the theatre during my office hours and I will be glad to assist you. Welcome to the Bauhaus!

Oskar Schlemmer

My Bauhaus journal

By Lisa Flanagan

September 20, 1927

When Gropius went (we assume with pleasure) to see his work, the newly established Bauhaus in Dessau, he got no little shock when he found that his students were using its flat roof and studio front for balancing exercises and as a cat burglar. Later he probably got used to it- there are some beautiful photographs of it. At least I managed to sit freely on the railing of my balcony, though at first I had attacks of dizziness when others did it.

On the basement floor was the gymnasium. There was a large soft carpet there, and though it was strictly forbidden, several people who couldn't afford anything else slept there. Showers, baths-all very convenient. Not bad. (quoted in Neumann 107-108)

September 22, 1927

There is a great freedom to the student style. Boys have long hair, girls short skirts. No collars or stockings are worn. There seems to be some sort of "official" Bauhaus garment worn by many students incorporating a loose-hanging, neutral colored tunic. One of the boy students taught me the Bauhaus salute, fingers spread, hand perpendicular to the face, thumb slides from the bridge of the nose up the forehead. They even have a Bauhaus whistle, sounding much like the nightingale song so prevalent here. The official dance is performed to the accordion, "a kind of hop expressing the joy of living"(quoted in Neumann 164-165).

The New Girls



(in Fiedler and Feierabend 98)

The "New Look"



(in Fiedler and Feierabend 104)

Figure 25. Two Photographs of Bauhaus Women.

September 23, 1927

My new friend Fritz shared an interesting story about his experience in Moholy-Nagy's elementary design class. It seems things didn't go too well at first for him last year. The

class focuses on three-dimensional compositions in wood. He found it all to be mere child's play. It wasn't until the third project, which involved taking his second wood project and combining it with a "balancing exercise" in a way that emphasizes aesthetic appeal that he moved past his initial hesitations. He said his understanding went beyond an intellectual knowledge to a whole body experience of gravity. His subsequent projects no longer seemed like "senseless games" to him (quoted in Wingler 156). I feel less sure of the idea of gravity to begin with, and more tolerant of play, so perhaps I will enjoy such games.

September 24, 1927

Preliminary Course:

Joseph Albers entered the room with a bundle of newspapers under one arm, which he gave out to the students. He then turned to us with roughly the following words: "Ladies and Gentlemen, we are poor, not rich. We cannot afford to waste either time or materials. We must make the best out of the worst. Every work of art starts from a specific material, and we must therefore first study how that material is constituted. To this end, we shall first simply experiment-without trying to produce anything. For the present we shall focus on skill, not beauty. The complexity of the form is dependent upon the material with which we are working. Bear in mind that you often achieve more by doing less. Our studies should inspire constructive thinking. Have I made myself clear? I would now like you to take the newspaper you have just been given and make something out of it which is more than it is now. I would also like you to respect the material, to employ it in a meaningful way and thereby consider its characteristic qualities. If you can do so without the aid of knives, scissors or glue, so much the better. Good luck!"

Hours later he returned, and had us lay out the results of our efforts on the floor. There were masks, boats, castles, airplanes, animals and numerous cleverly devised little figures. He dismissed it all as childish rubbish and said that a lot of it would have been better made using other materials. He then picked out one, very simple-looking piece of work by a young Hungarian architect. He had done nothing more than fold the material from top to bottom so that it stood up like a pair of wings. Josef Albers now explained how well the material had been understood, how well it had been used and how folding was a particularly appropriate process to apply to paper since it made what was such a soft material rigid, indeed so rigid that it could be stood on its narrowest point- its edge. He also explained how a newspaper lying on a table has only one visually active side, the rest being invisible. But with the paper standing up, both sides had become visually active. The paper had thus lost its boring exterior, its tired appearance. (quoted in Droste 141-142)

September 25, 1927

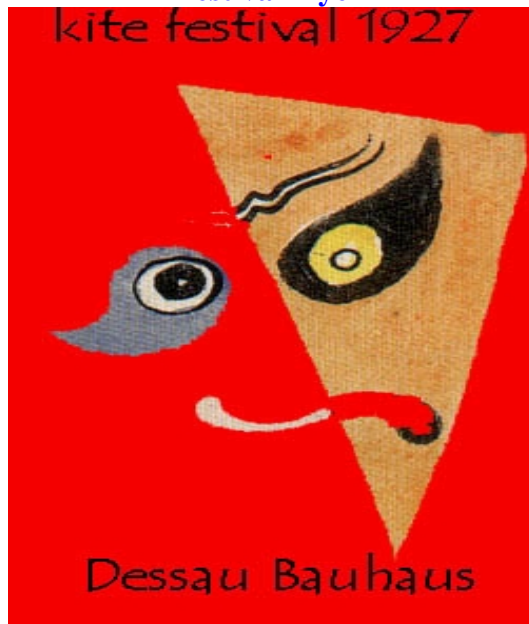
"Kandinsky's class please?"

“Up these stairs, second floor left.”

[...] I am all shadow and only a case under my arm containing immature, inferior work, which I feel is much too personal, completely subjective and tasteless. Searchingly I pass closed doors with often quoted imposing names, along the silent corridors to the door: painting class. Kandinsky. Thank God *he* has not yet arrived! I find a seat. Benches and tables, like in a classroom.

He enters. Immediately everything unreal vanishes in front of these lively, fast-moving, pale blue eyes looking through sharp glasses. A glance interested in everything, which continuously seems to discover new secrets in the world around us. Suddenly questions and answers and one is right in the middle of the problems of his color system. He has brought along a great variety of rectangles, squares, disks, and triangles in various colors, which he holds in front of us to test and to build our visual perception. In one combination, for instance, yellow is in front and blue in back. If I add this black, what happens then? Etc., etc. For the painter this is a never-ending game, magic and even torture, when one, for instance, “cannot get something to the front.” (quoted in Neumann 171-172)

Festival Flyer



(in Fiedler and Feierabend 127)

October 14, 1927

Today was the annual kite festival. This was my first such exposure to the quartet of theme parties which are standard seasonal affairs around here. “The kite party was celebrated with ...fantastic artifacts which, admittedly, were sometimes so beautiful that they could not fly” (Ackermann 127). The party began in the school’s Weimar days, and the tradition has carried on to Dessau as a way to celebrate the beginning of a new semester. I very much enjoyed the Bauhaus band. Their jazz was infectious!

Figure 26. *Kite Festival* Poster.

December 5, 1927

We celebrated Herr Kandinsky’s 60th birthday party today, as well as the first year anniversary of the new Dessau Bauhaus building. “On this occasion students and teachers made lavish fun of themselves, for their theme was *Slogan Party*. The Weimar Matter, the play put on for this celebration, consisted solely of slogans, while Moholy’s

‘feelers’ (an exercise from the preliminary course at which, with closed eyes, the qualities of materials were to be deduced by touch) were expanded to gigantic proportions and constructed from sausage, wire brooms and wool” (Ackermann 135). I performed the role of costumer, not having any of the insider knowledge of the Weimar years. I did enjoy the “feelers” activities, as it has been a part of my experience in the classroom of late. The exaggeration of the elements parallels my interest in the stage costumes used by Schlemmer in the stage workshop.

February 4, 1928

I learned today that Gropius is resigning from the Bauhaus. His resignation letter to the mayor was reprinted in a newspaper article. He said he wants to carry out the Bauhaus ideals beyond the school and concentrate on his private practice. He also made an announcement at the dance this evening that sent the whole school into a melancholy and even angry mood. There seems to be some speculation about the abilities and motivations of his chosen successor, Hannes Mayer, the recently named head of the architecture department. Tempers flared, but I hope calm will ultimately prevail. What will the Bauhaus be like without its founder (Wingler 136)?

March 17, 1928

Manda von Kreibling performed some dances she had work shopped with Oskar Schlemmer and members of the stage workshop this evening. She showed the pole dance; long white wooden rods against a black costumed performer and stage, restricting the motions of the limbs and also extending their visible mathematics of motion. And hoop dance, which consists of a stage full of white wooden hoops in various arrangements, both horizontal and vertical, containing a dancer who executes a dance using more of the same hoops (Wesemann 544-545). I was quite moved by these performances. It has taken my fascination with the theater to a new level of movement and dance. I already enjoyed the costumes, masks, props, and parody to be found in Schlemmer’s workshop, and now it all seems integrated in this idea of expression through forms.

I have long been involved with the theater’s projects, including costumes for various parties and some workshops when I’ve had the time. If all goes well, I will successfully complete my preliminary studies and be able to enter the stage workshop in the fall. I feel I have a good chance of being accepted because of my involvement with the theatre all along. Herr Schlemmer is a kind man and has taken an interest in my interest in his work. He assures me I need merely to complete my required course work. There is still the unspoken implication, here, that the appropriate place for “girl students” is in the weaving workshop. I hope to quietly slip around that expectation with my costuming skills.

March 31, 1928

Attended the *Beard, Nose and Heart Party* thrown by the Bauhaus band in Berlin. The party celebrated the nine-year anniversary of the Bauhaus! “Hair was shaped and

combed, curled and waved to form all kinds of beards from Suddermann to Chaplin””; and funny ““noses were fashioned.”” There was even a hairdresser’s shop (Ackermann 138).

Bauhaus Vol.2, No. 2/3, 1928

Max Bill:

“Man’s highest demand with respect to his social life is based on this insight: personal freedom (Gesell: physiocracy through free land and money). This is the reason why technology is so important. Technology should have freed man, but owing to the capitalist system it has enslaved him even more.

Perhaps, once personal freedom has been achieved, everyone will be his own artist. Some will be better, some worse (same as today). There will be those who merely produce art and those who experience art within themselves.

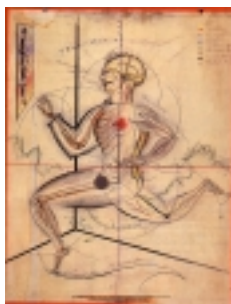
To leave the Bauhaus is pointless as long as things outside the Bauhaus look as they do today. I take the Bauhaus to be larger than it is in reality: Picasso, Jacobi, Chaplin, Eiffel, Freud, Stravinsky, and Edison, and others, are actually also a part of the Bauhaus.

The Bauhaus is an intellectual and progressive direction, a mental attitude, which one might call religion.” (quoted in Wingler 156).

Rehearsal for a parody of The Threepenny Opera will be held in the canteen from 7-9 every Wednesday and Thursday night. Organized by Master Klee. We hope to present our show at the annual *Kite Party* to be held in October. All interested students are encouraged to attend.

NEW (and improved) for Spring 1929

Oskar Schlemmer has restructured his new summer course “The Human Being” (Man) for next semester. Sign up now to learn the mystery behind the geometric principles of the human form. Discover the formalist canon to be found in the measure of the human figure.



(in Fiedler and
Feierabend 285)

“The circle of the chest,
the circle of the belly,
cylinder of the neck,
cylinders of arms and thighs,
sphere of the joints at elbow, knee, armpit and knuckle,
sphere of the head, the eyes,
triangle of the nose.

The line that links heart and brain,
the line that links sight with what is seen,
the ornament formed between body and outside world,
its relationship to it symbolized.”
(quoted in Fiedler and Feierabend 285)

Class will meet T/TH 2-4 in room 221

Figure 27. Bauhaus “Bulletin Board Postings.”

April 1, 1928

Today is Gropius' last official day as director of the Bauhaus. We are planning a big send-off in his honor soon. Everyone has been scrambling to create posters, skits, tokens, songs, etc., as parting gifts. These displays are as much to show our unity and commitment to the Bauhaus ideals as a tribute to the man who conceived of them.

June 11, 1928

Passed my courses! Am now officially in the Stage Workshop!!

February 10, 1929

My invitation



Figure 28. *Metallic Festival* “Invitation.”



“The Bauhaus band had donned party clothes, with coquettish silver top hats, and excelled themselves in the musical side of things with élan, rhythm, life. On stage brazen-tongued nonsense was spoken. An amusing women’s dance performed by men, and a sketch in which metal was actually represented only by the top of a helmet, satisfied the desire for spectacle and laughter. The best fancy dresses seen at the party also deserve to be remembered: a death’s-head hussar in black with an aluminum pot and a skimming spoon as a helmet, his chest embellished with silvery metal spoons; the lady in round white metal discs coquettishly wearing a spanner on her bracelet with which she invited each of her escorts to tighten the loose nuts...on the stroke of twelve the Iron Stock of the Bauhaus’ arrived: twelve fearless knights rattling and stamping their feet...What would the universe be without metal?” (Ackermann 138)

(in Fiedler and Feierabend 492)

Figure 29. Official *Metallic Festival* Ticket & Directions.

EDITORIALS***SOMETHING METALLIC – BAUHAUS CELEBRATION***

“With an elegant metal-colored card, printed with the usual lower-case Bauhaus type, the Dessau Bauhaus and the circle of friends issued invitations to a Metallic Festival. Metal is hard. But it is also sparkling and shiny. The festival last Saturday night proved to possess the latter qualities of metal...The party sparkled and shone, and yet was of such friendly gaiety and merriment, without ever getting out of hand in any way, that all participants enjoyed it thoroughly. The entrance to the gaily decorated rooms was really ingenious. One entered the party via a chute that was built down from the connecting hallway between the two Bauhaus buildings. Here, even the most dignified personalities could be observed gliding down into the festive rooms, welcomed by the tinkling of bells and a big flourish played by a live four-piece village band which meant well but sounded terrible....

And then there was music in the air everywhere, and everything was aglitter wherever one turned. The rooms and studios of two floors, which normally are used for serious work, had been decorated with the greatest

variety of forms placed together all over the walls, shinily metallic and fairy-like, the ceilings hung with bizarre paper configurations.... In addition music, bells, tinkling cymbals everywhere, in every room, in the stairways, wherever one went. [...]

Thus the brilliance of sparkling lights and the music of happy dance tunes created a gay and colorful image: the chute, loved by young and old, the shooting gallery where the little man and his lady could test their marksmanship, the amusing laughing gallery, the champagne corners, and particularly the different rooms where the guests danced to the tune of some excellent bands-the Bauhaus's own band walking off with the prize. The performances in the lecture hall...found an enthusiastic audience. A gay farrago of film pictures alternated with various stage presentations... An entertainer told amusing stories... So everyone enjoyed the party and it was late when the first guests began to think about facing the piercing cold, which made the way home particularly unpleasant that night.”(quoted in Wingler 157).

Figure 30. *Metallic Festival* Newspaper Review.

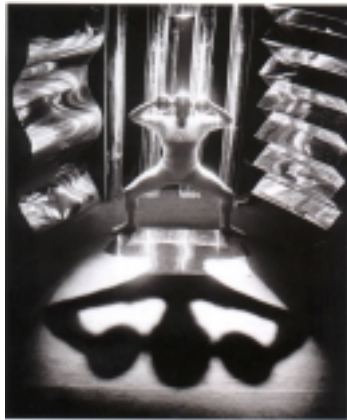
March 1, 1929

We have been working hard, getting ready to take our stage exercises on tour, which starts in Berlin in two days. We will also visit Breslau, Frankfurt am Main, Stuttgart and Basel in the next few weeks, performing pieces from our stage workshop efforts. We

have chosen those works that we feel best represent our “space analysis” dances. We want to highlight the “relationship of the human figure to stereometric space” through:

delineation of space; manipulation of props and resulting extensions/restrictions of movement with their use; projections of bodily motion and construction through costumes and masks; and abstraction in formal composition using backdrops and lighting (Wesemann 547). I am especially excited to have been chosen to perform the Rod/Slat/Pole Dance, which I first saw exhibited by Manda von Kreibling almost a year ago. I also am to perform Dance in Metal in a costume of white tights and silver sphere head and hand accessories. This is a brief, “crisp” piece set in a small metallic framework (quoted in Wingler 157). The motions are simple to accentuate the play of the material (Wesemann 541). My final piece is the carnivalesque, Three Baroque Ladies, in which we wear “dresses made of light-colored curtain material with large flower patterns. Broad brimmed, flapping hats. [We] bow to each other, spy on each other, and gossip about each other. Then [...] fix [our] hair in front of a mirror and pose for an imaginary photographer for sentimental group pictures” (quoted in Wingler 158).

Metal Dance- reflection



(in Fiedler and Feierabend 541)

Slat Dance-pinwheel



(in Fiedler and Feierabend 545)

3 Baroque Ladies - shadow wives



(in Wingler 476).

Figure 31. Photographs of Three Bauhaus Dances.

Frankfurter Zeitung No. 269, April 22, 1929

The Performance of the "Bauhaus Stage Dessau" at the Frankfurt Schauspielhaus on April 20, 1929. A Review by Benno Reifenberg

"But what about man? What happened to God's image? This is what the audience uneasily asks after it has been tortured by this specter as if thumb screws had been applied. The Bauhaus stage, under the direction and production of Professor Oskar Schlemmer, answers these questions as follows: We are basing our work on space, form, color, material; the laws of these elements have a determining effect on psycho-physical behavior. We are interested in exploring 'strict regularity'; we are striving to achieve the highest form of art, we are striving to achieve intensity. This is the only way we can regenerate the art of acting. The Herr Professor is a zealot. Schlemmer is an ascetic-he is a reformer. He hopes by abstraction to clear the way to find law, so that later, in a realm of order, he can rediscover renewed man.

ouch!

One is reminded that the great movement of Expressionism in art began with similar ideas; what one called nonrepresentational art was to be understood only as an attempt at reform and those people who all too pitilessly...laughed at Professor Schlemmer should remember that it is hard to interpret Picasso in any other way.... There was a similar problem when people were attempting to gain an understanding of Negro sculpture and when they sought to find laws in those strange cubes. This followed a train of thought that had originated a long time ago with Durer and his 'proportion figures,' and which was taken up again in those early years of the latest art movement and with which one sought, with a kind of courageous asceticism, to fight through the thicket of an age deprived of religion" (quoted in Wingler 158).

If Reifenberg had waited a few days to read this review from 4/30 in Basel's National-Zeitung

Dance of Hoops. The girl in the black tights is playing with a white hoop. She whirls it around herself, tosses it up, high, low, makes it vibrate-does everything possible with it. Suddenly a whole net of hoops descends from above, and a second one and a third one and then hoop figures, larger than life and looking like the Michelin tire man. The girl takes a tapering bundle of hoops and forms one figure after another with them. But suddenly the human being is tired of being a tool of material things and of twisting into all kinds of poses: it lets go of the hoops and they bounce in every direction. The human being stands there alone and free! It was man who had thought of the whole thing, had kept the hoops together and formed the figures! When he has had enough of it all, he lets go of everything, and the material things, into whose service she had submitted herself, are powerless, are dead! This reminds one of the critics who accuse the Bauhaus stage of mechanizing and degrading man! Exactly the opposite is the case, the Bauhaus stage demonstrates the sovereignty of man, who is able to play with material things. [...]

People who are trying to discover 'something' behind all this-will not find anything, because there is nothing to discover *behind* this. Everything is there, right in what one perceives! There are no feelings which are 'expressed,' rather, feelings are evoked... The whole thing is a 'game,' It is a freed and freeing 'game'... Pure absolute form. Just as music is." (quoted in Wingler 158)

Figure 32. Bauhaus "Bulletin Board" Stage Performance Reviews.

May 23, 1929

Herr Schlemmer has announced his pending resignation from the Bauhaus. He has accepted a teaching position in Breslau. We are all deeply saddened. I don't know who might replace him. And even if they would, could they? should they? The Bauhaus, dare I say all of Germany, is becoming more and more politicized in a way that tends to drive the spirit from such aesthetic game playing. Technology and progress have become things valued in their own rights, without much thought for the human beings who must live and work through and for them. Indeed, the human element seems almost subservient to these new ideologies of efficiency and superiority. I think it may well be time for me to find a new venue in which to continue my games of form, one that still places our humanity superior to the systems we create. I believe this is the impetus in Schlemmer's playful theatre; one that recognizes the role we play in conceiving the world formally and that enjoys the spectacle created and evoked in such activity. Perhaps it is time to return to the States, with a slight detour to Paris to visit the old Dadaists/new (er) Surrealists haunting the cafes and galleries there....

Invitation to Schlemmer's sendoff: A colorful and sad goodbye.

A fond farewell to the man before the bell jar!

Join us in the stage workshop this Saturday for a grand finale in honor of Herr Schlemmer.

Jazz band!
Dancing!
Skits and parody!
Costume and masks!
Props and blocks!

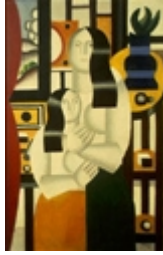


(in Fiedler and Feierabend 280)

We'll wish him well in Grand Bauhaus style.

Figure 33. "Invitation" to Oskar Schlemmer's Goodbye Party.

CHAPTER FIVE GENERATING FORM



"If you can imagine a thing, conjure it up in space then you can make it up.... The universe is real but you can't see it. You have to imagine. Then you can be realistic about reproducing it." (Calder quoted in Baer 491)

Figure 34. Leger, Fernand. Two Women.

Edward was complaining to Carl about margins. "The *w i d t h* of the margin shows culture, aestheticism and a sense of values or the lack of them," he said.

"A very wide left margin shows an impractical person of culture and refinement with a deep appreciation for the best in art and music.

Whereas," Edward said, quoting his handwriting analysis book,

"whereas, narrow left margins show the opposite.

No left margin at all shows a practical nature, a wholesome economy and a general lack of good taste in the arts.

A very wide *right* margin shows a person afraid to face reality, oversensitive to the future and generally a poor mixer."

"I don't believe in it," Carl said.

"Now," Edward continued, "with reference to your sign there, you have an *all-around wide margin* which shows a person of extremely delicate sensibilities with love of color and form, one who holds aloof from the multitude and lives in his own dream world of beauty and good taste."

"Are you sure you got that right?"

(Barthelme, "Margins" 9; emphases in original)



Figure 35. Calder's Wire Circus from "Circus" Webpage.

CHAPTER SIX

A LESSON IN FORMAL AESTHETICS

In this chapter, I apply my own understanding of the basic concepts, principles, and properties of formal aesthetics as theorized and practiced by the Bauhaus' faculty and students. I offer this interpretation as a guide for the reader, which provides the formal aesthetic discourse that informs my interpretations of the Bauhaus' performances that are discussed in Chapters Eight, Ten, and Twelve. I use the "lecture" or "lesson" format because it requires me to be clear and concise in articulating formal aesthetics. This format also prompts the use of cogent examples, and additionally, makes room for the inclusion of exercises that the reader-student may undertake to better understand the concepts of formal aesthetics by practicing with them. As such, the "lessons" that follow replicate or "cite" classroom discourse and are explicitly "consequential." They create "a current of confidence" in the audience or reader (Marinetti, Marinetti 202).

- I. Conceptual Rationale
- II. Definition: What is formal aesthetics?
- III. Formal Aesthetics Specified by the Bauhaus?
- IV. What constitutes formal aesthetics?
 - A. Line
 - B. Shape
 - C. Color
 - D. Texture
- V. How does formal aesthetics ask us to compose and view works?
- VI. What are the ramifications and limitations of formal aesthetics?

I. Today's lesson concerns the body of theory and practice known as formal aesthetics, and particularly as it relates to the artistic concerns of the Bauhaus. I will begin by providing conceptual rationale for the study and practice of formal aesthetics. Then, I will define the term and further specify its meaning vis a vis Bauhaus practice. I will further tackle the principles and properties of the key formal elements, line, shape, color, and texture. Involved here are theories pertaining to the effects and associations of the elements and as used. Throughout the lesson, I offer examples and also a progressive series of exercises that I would like you to do as we progress. In conclusion, I theorize as to how formal aesthetics ask us to compose and view works, and the ramifications and limitations of such compositions and perspective(s).

Formal composition elements can profoundly affect our production and appreciation of all kind of texts. The comprehension of formal elements is best realized in actual practice as compared to theoretical discussion and analysis. Although the latter methods can help us frame and context the affects and effects of formal aesthetics, it is the somatic experience of using and experiencing these elements in a work that offers us the basis for relaying our sensory impressions, thoughts, feelings, and questions. In fact, artistic production and appreciation might best begin in childlike games of active experimentation and experience. W.L. Brittain, author of Creativity, Art and the Young Child concurs:

“There is something exciting for children in the organizing and abstracting process which is a necessary part of producing art. This is not a passive activity, but one which encompasses all of the senses, each providing some input into an operational system which creates new forms that are constantly altered through the interaction process. The activity of bringing together and elaborating upon the essence of the external world, coupled with the physical activity of exploring

through the use of color, form, and space, provides an opportunity to develop a reality which in a broad sense could be considered knowledge.” (quoted in Lasky and Mukerji 111)

The sense of play and experimentation that Brittain speaks of informs our ability to take the general, abstract formal elements and create our own personal and inventive creations. By basing our inventive play in the shared discourse of traditional forms, we encourage our audience’s active response and inter-play. This process is dynamic; we are always (re) learning how to negotiate the expressive functions of form through our continued use of and encounters with the elements of creative production. In the words of our own Paul Klee,


“The way to form, which must be dictated from some inner or outer necessity, is above the end itself, beyond the end of the way. The way is the essence and defines the character of the work, determined once and for all. Formation determines the form and is therefore the more important of the two. Form then is never to be regarded as a conclusion, a result, an end, but as genesis, becoming.” (quoted in Whitford, 69)

In other words, we must activate the interpretive possibilities in the creative process and act. Our associations should evoke further meanings out of the general categories of form. The creative work(s), then, becomes a metaphor for the continuing flux of our perceptual realities.

II. What is formal aesthetics?

Formal aesthetics refer to the basic composition elements that constitute a work of art. Regardless of medium, formal aesthetics provide the practical, if not also theoretical, framework for artistic expression and, specifically in this case, visual design and composition. The basic composition elements include line, shape, color, and texture. Each element is itself constituted by certain natural laws of physics and geometry. In geometric terms, for example, a line is a point that moves through space, or is the result

● = a location in space having neither dimensions nor substance

of connecting two points together (Pile 47). In physics, color is the result of the human eye's  2 points suggest a beginning and an end (Pile 46) perception and interpretation of different wave lengths of radiant energy, or light (Pile 261). As such, formal aesthetics are rooted in certain fundamental natural laws and therefore are capable of general, abstract, or universal expressions. The effects of formal elements operate on the viewer as an immediate appeal to the senses. There are Often secondary or cultural associations are made by the viewer directly after. For instance, the color white is constituted by the reflection of all the wave lengths of radiant energy, or light. White is light and, in natural terms, light permits us to see things, as compared to our inability to see when light is absorbed or absent. In our culture, the secondary associations we typically equate to white are purity, clarity, openness, and brightness, whereas we often equate black to solemnity, mystery and evil (Pile 271).

Death = black in Western traditions and white in China, other Oriental societies (Pile 268).

In the application of formal aesthetics, the composer should take into account the effect of the combination and composition of elements. In other words, rarely is the use and hence effect of an element “pure.” Complementary colors, for instance, effect a different response than analogous colors, and the effect of the color combination is further impacted by the size, shape, and orientation of the linear form or plane in which that are articulated.

To apply formal elements of composition, one must be willing to study and understand their basic principles and properties. The best way to gain this understanding is by playing with the various elements, through hands on manipulation and construction. Below is the first part of the exercise you will process throughout this lesson. To do the exercise, you will need paper and crayons or colored pens. Or, you may cut basic geometric shapes from colored construction paper and use them. Your choice!

Exercise One: Select a poem that you like, or use the poem below. Select three or four colors and three or four basic geometric shapes. Illustrate the poem using the lines and shapes and/as colored (Bang 140).

“Night water Blues”

A horizon is formed from the upward motion.
A horizon is formed from the upward motion.
Reflecting a line from the sky to the ocean.

Against the inky darkness, a full moon is born.
Against the inky darkness, a full moon is born.
A bright shining ball, floats up against the sunset’s storm.

As we peer into the night sky, we can almost see the coming dawn.
A slow descent of yellowed moonlight, as the sun begins its ruby climb.
A clear sky reflected in the sea’s calm, and the emerald sight of land spurs us on.

We plot a course to distant shores.
As stable shoulders draw our oars.
And draw a chart from ship to stars.
The cut through blackness leaves no scars.

This is my illustration of the poem. What does yours look like?

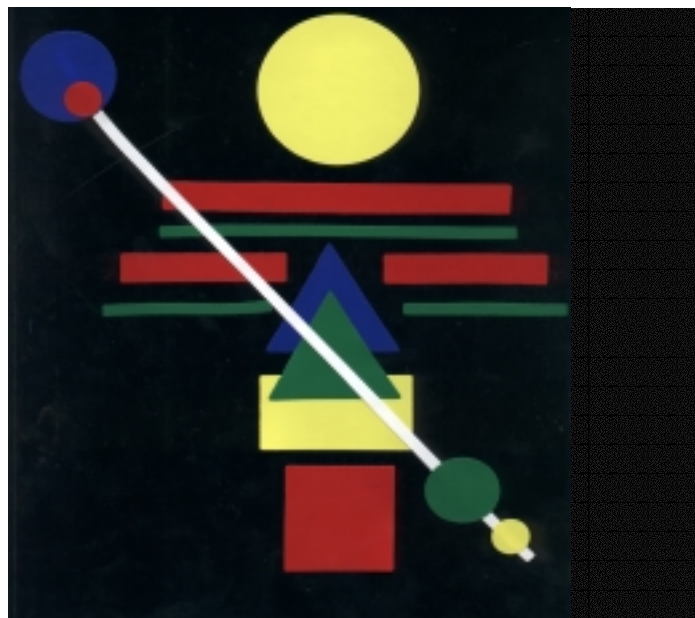


Figure 36. Exercise One Illustration.

III. Formal Aesthetics specified by the Bauhaus.

For the Bauhaus practitioners, formal aesthetics provided a means of creation and expression that allowed for a unity in composition and towards the various design applications undertaken in the school. As the overriding aim was to figure out how to best design spaces for personal and social interaction, knowledge of formal aesthetics was used to meet that aim and also interpret the effect. As such, the creation of useful and pleasing spaces was grounded in natural laws of creation and their effect. As Klee advised, “Follow the ways of natural creation, the becoming, the functioning of forms. That is the best school. Then, perhaps starting from nature, you will achieve formations of your own, and one day you may even become like nature yourself and start creating” (quoted in Whitford 92).

In reference to the Stage Workshop, performance was used as a way to activate, explore, and experiment with the use and effect of formal aesthetics in a three-dimensional and live/living space. In a sense, performance replicated the ever-shifting dynamics of elements in “real” or lived-in space. And, just like Klee urged a grounding in natural forms, so too Schlemmer prompted,

"The formula for the Bauhaus theatre is very simple: as few prejudices as possible; regard the world as if it had just been created; don't think things to death let them develop gradually, freely in their own way; be simple, but not poor; too simple is better than elaborate or pompous; be witty rather than sentimental...Begin with elementary things. Start with the point, line, simple surfaces; start with the construction of simple surfaces, with the body and simple colors like red, blue and yellow, black, white and gray. Begin with materials; feel the different textures of glass, metal, wood, and then assimilate them. Begin with space, its laws and mysteries, and let yourself be 'bewitched' by them. Begin with the positions of the body, from the simple presence to the positions of standing, walking and finally leaping and dancing. To take a step, raise a hand or even wiggle a finger is an adventure." (quoted in Baker 48)

The Bauhaus' appreciation for the elemental forms and their effects opened up a range of possible applications and meanings; an “adventurous” playground of “what if” experimentation.

Exercise Two: How do you interpret the illustration you created in Exercise One? Change one of the colors or shapes in your piece. Or change the position of one of the elements. What meanings do you see now? Show your piece to a classmate and ask them to tell you what they see or interpret.

IV. What constitutes formal aesthetics?

The basic elements of formal aesthetics are line, shape, color, and texture. I will define each element and discuss its principles and properties. I also will consider the effect of the element when combined with other similar and varied elements.

Before I discuss the first element, line, I should observe that the fundamental principle of natural and formal aesthetic composition is contrast. As Molly Bang puts it, “contrasts enable us to see”; to see (and avoid) the yellow snake in the green grass or to see (and bask in) the yellow sun in the blue sky. Contrasts can be effected between colors, shapes, lines and textures, placement, and any combination of these elements. It is the contrast that enables us to see the elements and their patterns. Pictures, and human perceptions, are based on contrasts (Bang 110).

The importance of contrast is evident in the design of many of the courses at the Bauhaus. Following the basic format established by Johannes Itten in 1919, the preliminary course

familiarized students with the basics of material properties, composition, and colour. The course focused on the effects of contrasts, their recognition and their creation in a wide variety of forms and materials with a view to showing how two different elements influence one another. Studies in materials were another important component of the course. Students were required to use materials to represent, in a sensually graspable manner, contrasting properties in three-dimensional studies or in drawings. (Bauhaus-Archiv 8)

Kandinsky's analytical drawing class, which ran parallel to the preliminary course, also emphasized contrast. In it,

[the] students' arrangements of objects found in the classroom were analyzed in terms of their compositional principles. Students were expected to establish primary and secondary tension, to recognize dominating elements and record them in simple line-drawings. The resulting patterns could be developed into free artistic compositions. The objective of the course was to understand the process of abstraction. (Bauhaus-Archiv 11)

We also can recognize the importance of contrast in performance. By

(re)combining the formal elements as the basis of what "encompassed the realm of the theater"(Neumann 169), Schlemmer's Stage Workshop focused on the application and effect of manipulating shapes, color, space, and man. In recalling her husband's theories and experiments, Tut Schlemmer observes,

"The elements are space, form, color, and light: space-its planimetry, its laws, and its mystery; form-any of its manifold manifestations as a plain surface or sculpture; color-as a phenomenon, its reciprocal influence, harmony, disharmony; and light-lighting, projection, transparency, and film should be essential media to demonstrate the inner laws suitable for the stage, away from naturalistic tendencies of imitation. [...]"

Shape and color are the tools of the creative designer, space and man are the polar components around which the world of the stage revolves. Let us watch what space, shape, and color can do to influence man (quoted in Neumann 169).


The Bauhaus theatre contrasted not only the elements of stage composition and design but it also contrasted the content, composition, and aims of the realistic theater of illusion popular throughout the twentieth century.

A. A line is a point that extends in any direction. It has length but not breadth.

Lines are recognizable where things have edges, where planes meet, or where there is a change of color or surface. Lines can be straight or curved. They can be vertical, horizontal, or diagonal (Pile 47).


As “the strongest physical force that we’re consciously aware of” and subject to at all times (Bang 56), gravity is the motivating factor in how we perceive lines. A horizontal line/object does not or does not appear to challenge gravity. In elemental terms, it equates to the rest and repose required by all living things. John F. Pile and, then, Molly Bang explain,

Gravity pulls materials down to a horizontal resting point parallel to the ground in a horizontal line, and earth and sky seem to meet in a horizontal. Human experience of the horizontal reclining position in rest and sleep reinforces these perceptions. Floors and ceilings, normally horizontal, are the surfaces that give spaces their sense of reassuring normality. (Pile 47)

Smooth, flat shapes give us a sense of stability and calm. I associate horizontal shapes with the surface of the earth or the horizon line-- with the floor, the prairie, a calm sea. We humans are most stable when we are horizontal, because we can’t fall down. Shapes that lie horizontal look secure because they won’t fall on us either. (Bang 56) 

Gravity is also at the root of vertical lines. They are firmly grounded by gravity, but and yet they also expend energy against it; towering up into space.

[Vertical lines] suggest stability and immobility, and by extension, dignity and permanence. The significance of verticality comes, it seems, from the downward direction of the force of gravity. This force dictates verticals, always perpendicular to all horizontals, as the basic structural support. The vertical columns of a building suggest its solidity and permanence. (Pile 47)

 Vertical shapes are more exciting and more active. Vertical shapes rebel against the earth’s gravity. They imply energy and reaching toward heights or the heavens. Think of the things that grow or are built vertically: trees and plants grow up toward the sun; churches and skyscrapers reach toward the heavens as

high as they can go. These structures require a great deal of energy to build-- to become vertical. They will release a great deal of energy if they fall. Vertical structures are monuments to kinetic energy of the past and the future, and to potential energy of the present. (Bang 58)

Diagonal (oblique) lines are many and can fall along any point between the vertical/upright and the horizontal/repose.

These are always, in a sense, transitional between vertical and horizontal, the positions that gravity tolerates, and are held only through some special means of resistance to gravitational forces. A person leans forward to run, making us associate activity and movement with oblique lines. While there can be only one horizontal and one vertical direction, oblique lines can take an infinite number of angular slopes. [...] A sloping ceiling or wall makes a space seem active, lively, even possibly disturbing through its implication of movement. (Pile 47)

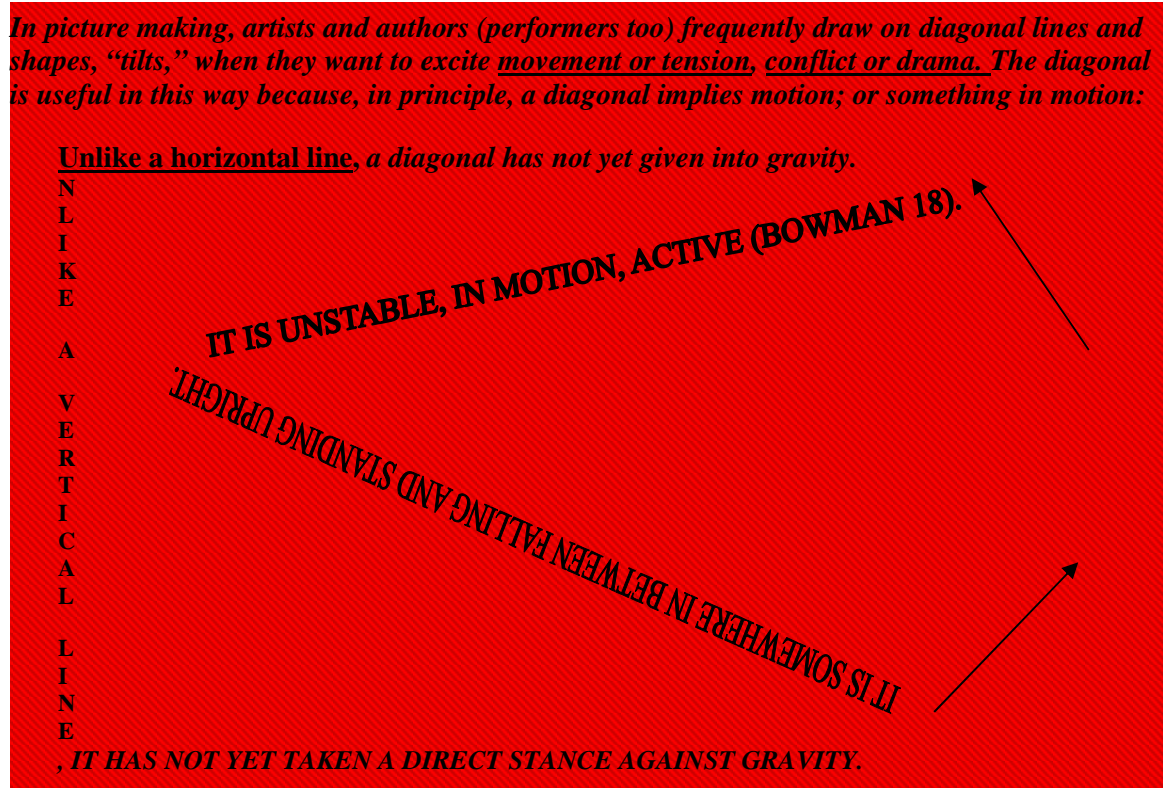


Figure 37. Diagonal Lines.

A curved line is the result of a moving point that continually changes direction.

“Curving forms occur more often in nature than rectilinear forms, leading us to perceive curvatures as more natural, freer, and more ‘humane’ than straight-lined forms” (Pile 47).

Curved lines, whether parts of circles or more complex curvatures, all seem active and flexible. One example of how the principles and properties of lines have been explicitly and inventively applied to art is geometric string art.

Curves made up of straight lines? Such is the case in geometric string art. A finished piece might seem to contain a multitude of curves, but in fact there will not be a single one. All of the curves are made of tiny straight-line segments. The human eye is just not sensitive to see them as anything but curves.

String art is believed to have originated in 1906 in a kindergarten teacher's manual, written by Edith Somervell. Her *Rhythmic Approach to Mathematics* is a teaching aid for mathematic study. The preface, by Mary Everest Boole, reports that in 1898, these two women acquired drawings of curves made of straight lines from a man named Benjamin Betts, who had retired to a Brazilian forest to study philosophy. Mrs. Somervell saw in his drawings a link between “an organic thought sequence and the evolution of form.” [The example she used is called the curve of pursuit. See below.] The curve is created by the interaction of a rabbit and a hungry dog. As the rabbit runs towards the safety of the burrow, the dog changes course to follow him. The straight lines represent the dog's wishes-to get the rabbit when the rabbit is at some particular point. The curve represents the dog's actions when the rabbit continues to move. Hence the name, the curve of pursuit. Whether or not you find philosophy in string art, the pieces are intriguing and quite simple to construct. (Ohanian 18:2270)



(in Ohanian 18:2270)



(in Ohanian 18:2280)

Figure 38. String Art Design.

In similar geometric-philosophical terms, Klee conceptualizes the dot, or point, and as it begins to extend into a line.

“The word as a hypothesis, as an idea for the creation of a work. This is an abstract of the latent energy of the dot. The dot is ready, given the slightest cause, to abandon its immobility and to become linear.

Viewed pictorially, the seed corn grows roots, the line turns at first down into the earth, not to remain there, only to gather strength for its growth into the airy kingdom.... The nerve skeleton of this formal image is linear. To spread outwards and to seek power over a larger space the linear unity splits up.... The original point between earth and sky is extended and the universal plant becomes a tree-root, trunk, and crown.” (quoted in Geelhaar 29)

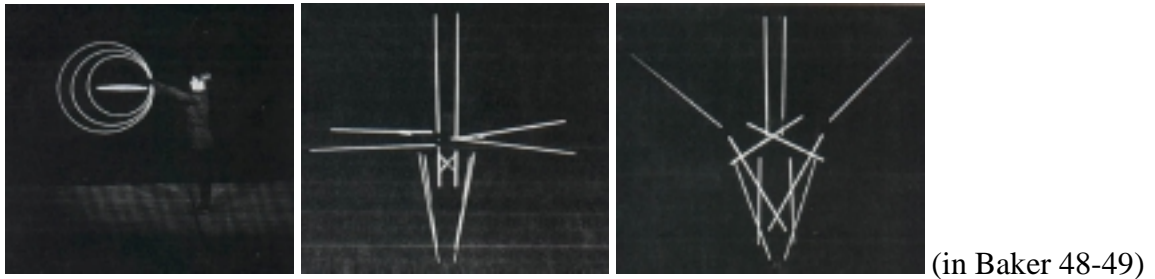


Figure 39. Hoop Dance and Slat Dance

Exercise Three: Translate your composition, from exercise One or Two, to its essential movements, its chief lines and curves. To emphasize the linear aspects and effects, use “neutral” colors only, black, white, and, if you like, gray. Show your composition to your classmates. What do they see in it? What do you see or sense?

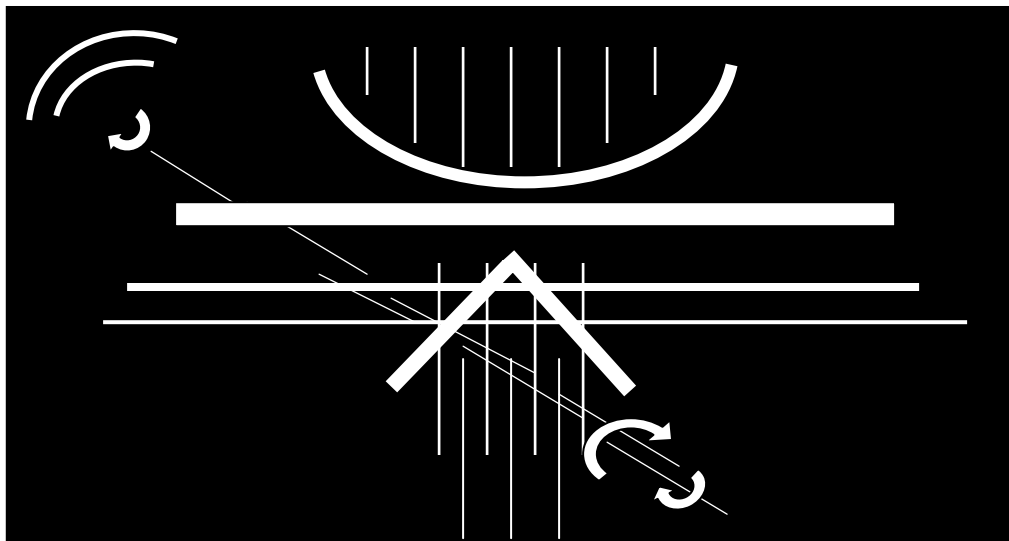


Figure 40. Exercise Three Illustration.

A horizon is formed from the upward motion.
A horizon is formed from the upward motion.
Reflecting a line from the sky to the ocean.

B. I've already begun to make mention of the general effects that shapes have on us in relation to the kinds of lines that constitute them. The next step is to focus on the particular affective features to be found in the world of shapes. John F. Pile helps us out by explaining that two-dimensional shapes are planes, and

A plane is a completely flat surface, created by intersecting lines. Planes are two-dimensional, with length and width, as are plane figures that lie completely in one plane—such as the triangle, square, circle, and so on. Planes also contain irregular or free shapes that conform to no particular geometric definition. The human mind seems to be drawn toward recognition of simple geometric shapes, perhaps because, being perfect forms, they can be held in memory and reproduced with ease. In a scatter of points, the eye will seek out a triangle, square, or circle or find an image with a recognizable form. The constellations of the night sky are images suggested by the relationship of bright stars seen as points. The Big Dipper, for example, is simply an arrangement of bright points that suggests the form of a long-handled cup. Once that grouping is pointed out and named, it becomes easy to locate and recognize amid the vast number of other stars that surround it. (47)

Our attraction to and the effects of the single geometric shapes Pile mentions (e.g., the triangle, square, and circle), are due to the elemental laws in which they are based. For instance, because “pointed objects [or shapes] can easily pierce through our innards and kill us” and because “curved shapes embrace and protect us [...] we feel more scared looking at pointed shapes” and “we feel more secure or comforted looking at rounded shapes or curves” (Bang 96, 98)

Other basic principles and associations regarding shape are:

▲ “A triangle placed on a flat base gives a feeling of stability” (Bang 70).

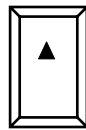
◀ The same triangle placed on a diagonal gives a sense of movement—whether we see it as a triangle teetering on one point, about to fall back and lie flat again, or whether we read it as a missile shooting up toward the right hand corner of the page.

Notice how it feels as though it were floating, because there isn't any defined "ground" or baseline attached to it. (Bang 72)

Whatever the shape, where we position it in the frame of the page or space is important. In fact, "the movement of the picture is determined as much by the spaces between shapes as by the shapes themselves" (Bang 120). For example, space can isolate a figure, make that "figure alone, free, and vulnerable" (Bang 118). ▲

▲▲▲▲▲▲▲▲▲▲▲▲ A "Wide space can create tension between the divided objects, but so can a sliver^{of} space (Bang 128-130, emphases added). Shapes and objects can also overlap, "the overlapping object 'takes the space' of the covered one." It "pierces' or 'violates' the space of the other, but this also joins them together into a single unit" (Bang 122).

In the overall frame of the picture or (stage) space,



The upper half of a picture is a place of freedom, happiness and triumph; objects placed in the top half often feel more 'spiritual. Again, this is due to the force of gravity: objects that are higher up give a sense of floating or flying or otherwise escaping the gravitational pull of the earth. (Bang 76)



The bottom half [...] feels more threatened, heavier, sadder, or more constrained; objects placed in the bottom half also feel more "grounded"...more attached to the earth and less mobile. (Bang 78)



The center of the page [or stage] is the most effective "center of attention." It is the point of greatest attraction". [...] The edges and corners of the picture are the edges and corners of the picture-world." (Bang 84, 88)

For at least two of the Bauhaus' masters, certain shapes and colors were, in elemental terms, inextricably combined. Both Itten and Kandinsky developed systems that associated the three "primary" shapes square, circle, and triangle, with color systems. Both men attributed the same primary colors to each shape, blue circle, red square, and yellow triangle. Itten further added black with the square and white with the triangle as a

part of his system of associated meanings, based on his own mystical studies. Kandinsky had his own set associations, which derived as much from his synaesthetic ability to experience one sense in the perception of another as from his own spirituality. Both men sought to find practical, scientific rationales for their systems.

Itten

● = infinite symmetry, peaceful, always blue

■ = calm, death, black, dark, red

▲ = intensity, life, white, bright, yellow

(Schmitz 366, 387)

Kandinsky

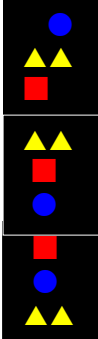
= ●

= ■

= ▲

For Schlemmer, of course, simple geometric shapes (and lines) helped him

delineate, articulate, and comprehend three-dimensional space. He explains,

	<p>“Space and body mechanics, the planimetric and the stereometric relationships of space together with the metaphysics inherent in the human body shall unite into a numerical, mystical synthesis...space! Only to be comprehended by feeling; then by pacing and touching its boundaries: a help is the geometry of the floor: center mark, axes, diagonals, circle, etc. A help also perhaps the lines through space, which separate and divide the room in order to make it understandable and comprehensible in this way. May the delineation of space solidify into two-dimensional shapes and the shapes crystallize into bodies that will analyze the nature of space and will vary the space as a whole.” (quoted in Wingler 472)</p>
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Exercise Four: In the following poem, Silverstein implies metaphoric

characteristics and a storyline and for the personified shapes.

SHAPES

A square was sitting quietly
Outside his rectangular shack

When a triangle came down-kerplunk! -
And struck him on the back.

“I must go to the hospital.”

Cried the wounded square,

So a passing circle

Picked him up and took him there. (77)

Take a look at the compositions you've created and invent metaphors of your own for the shapes you see and as contexted in the pictures. The square(s) is like a _____? And the circle(s) is like a _____? And, what about any triangles? What do they remind you of? Excerpt just the shapes from your pictures and use them to create a new picture in which they imply metaphoric characteristics that are quite different from those you listed above. Consider how changing the size, color, and placement of the shapes on the page might help you do this. Also, experiment with the dynamic SPACE between the shapes.

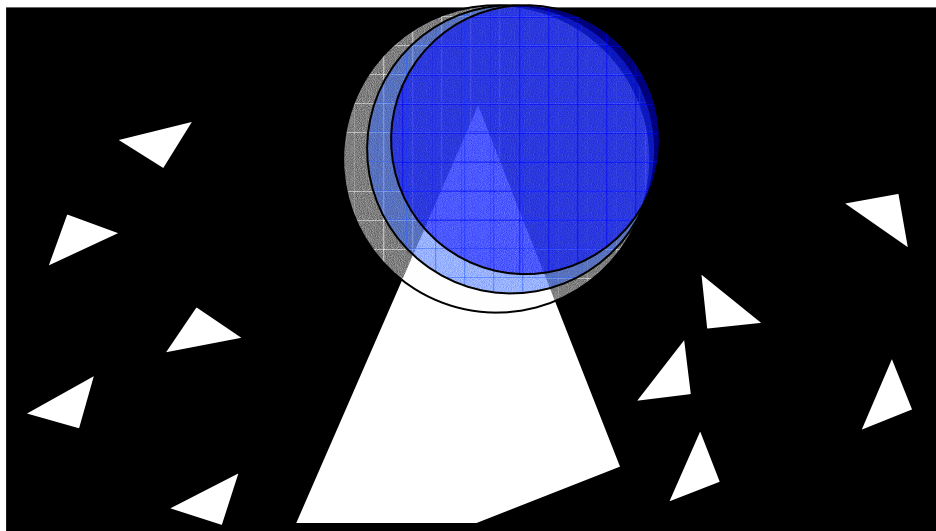


Figure 41. Exercise Four Illustration.

Inky darkness
Full Moon
Sunset's storm

C. Clearly, color infiltrated our discussion of shape. This is because color is an integral part of defining and delineating a form. To specify the operations and effects of color that effect it is important to understand that color is light.

Human vision depends on the presence of light, and the effect of color results from some special properties of light. Light is a form of radiant energy. The eye



distinguishes different wavelengths of the radiant energy, or light, and interprets them, in the brain, as different colors. [...] Daylight, or white light, is a random mixture of light of all wavelengths. [...] When white light passes through a glass prism, its different wavelengths become sorted into colors, creating the familiar rainbow, or spectrum, arranged according to wavelength. The longest is **red**, followed by **orange**, **yellow**, **green**, **blue**, and **violet**. [...] Colored light, produced by filtering white light so that only one color can pass through the filter (a colored glass or gelatin), makes normal color vision inoperative; everything appears as a tone of the colored light. [...] Color mixing of light, used mostly in theater, is called *additive* color, because mixtures are obtained by adding together the wavelengths that represent the three colors considered *primary* since they cannot be produced by mixing other colors. Any other color can be produced by mixing the three additive primaries – **red**, **blue**, and **green** (**yellow** is produced by adding **red** and **green**). All three produce white or normal light. (Pile 261-263; emphasis in original)

The other kind of color is called subtractive, which uses pigments or dyes as colorants. In subtractive color, “the object or material absorbs, or subtracts, all the colors of light except the color of the object, which is the color we see. A red object is actually one that absorbs all colors but red and reflects back only red light” (Pile 263). The three primaries for subtractive color are **red**, **yellow**, and **blue**.



Blending each pair of primaries generates the secondaries, **orange**, **green**, and **violet**. When each of these is placed between the pair of primaries that creates it, the six-color wheel results – the spectrum in its natural order. [...] If we mix two colors, for example **red** and **yellow**, as paint or pigment, the **red** pigment is subtracting all but **red** light reflection, the **yellow** all but **yellow**, so that the mixture reflects back some **red** and some **yellow**, producing the visual impression of **orange** color. (Pile 263)

Now that I’ve covered the basic physics and chemistry behind color, let’s turn our attention to the psychological impact of color. Colors affect our moods and emotions, physical sensations, spatial perceptions, and they also influence each other (Pile 268). The reasons for color’s effects are confusing and varied, encompassing associations to natural elements, physiological responses, and cultural connotations.

Our reaction to various colors seems to result from our association of these colors with certain natural objects-- that is, we associate red with blood and fire, white with light, snow and bones, black with darkness, yellow with the sun, blue with the sea and sky, et cetera. I'll call these objects-- fire, sun, sea, sky, and so on- "natural constants." Now these associations make perfect sense, and in many cases they must have helped us to stay alive.

But we then go on to make an interesting generalization. Just as we assume that all pointed shapes are sharp, we assume that everything with the same color as these "natural constants" *also* has their inherent qualities: a white swan seems more "pure" than a mallard duck, a red rose is more expressive of the blood and fire of our love than a pink one, a black crow looks nastier than a cuckoo, and so forth. These secondary associations are completely false, but we make them all the time. This "symbolism of color" is part of the way we function every day. [...] Color symbolism is based on a false generalization. It also works--very, very well. (Bang 104)

Below are some of the primary and secondary color associations as mapped out by two "experts" in color's effect, Molly Bang, artist and children's author, and John F. Pile, interior designer and textbook author. Both note the explicit first order associations of certain colors with natural phenomena, and then mention culturally specific derivative meanings applied to those primary associations.










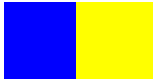



	<u>Primary</u>	<u>Secondary</u>
	Blood, fire	tension, danger, warm, hot, stimulating
	Sun	cheerfulness, humor, brightness
	Grass and leaves	calm, restful, peaceful, constructive, serenity
	Sea, sky	rest, repose, calm, dignity
	Light, snow, bones	clarity, openness, brightness, cleanliness, sanitation
	Darkness	weight, dignity, formality, solemnity
	-----	<div> <div>snug, clubby</div> <div> <div>masculine</div> <div>homelike</div> </div> </div>
	-----	
	-----	uncertainty, artistic, subtlety, sensitivity, ambiguity, tension, depression, dignity (Bang 104; Pile 270-71)

Figure 42. Color Associations.

While these generalizations seem to have considerable value, it must be remembered that colors are rarely used alone and that colors used together interact in ways that are very complex. [...] In practice, all of the systematic knowledge of color reviewed above is best absorbed as background for creative work that proceeds in ways that have no dependence on formula or routine. (Pile 271)

We've touched on the physics, natural associations, and cultural extensions of color theory. Alone and in confluence, these ways of responding to and understanding color have a powerful impact on man's perception and, in turn, his/her use of color in creative design and expression. In fact, Molly Bang claims, "We associate the same or similar colors much more strongly than we associate the same or similar shapes" (Bang 106). In other words, we tend to respond to patterns of color before we respond to other composition elements.

Kandinsky developed his own theory of color, which takes into account the concept of contrast and as it relates to color analysis. Kandinsky divided isolated color "into two parts: 1. warmth and cold of the color tone and 2. its lightness or darkness. Hence we get four main tones: 1. warm-light, 2. warm-dark, 3. cold-light, 4. cold-dark. Kandinsky begins with a subtractive primary color pair representing the two poles of temperature attributed to colors. The warmth or coldness of a color is generally a tendency toward yellow or blue," the "first great contrast in inner value," advances/material  recedes/ spiritual. He then addresses the concept of value, measured terms of the amount of light reflected, with the addition of more white, or absorbed, by adding more black. "The second great contrast is the difference between white and black" or the color's tendency toward light  toward dark. His third pair of contrasts seems based on additive color properties, namely green's value as a primary additive color, and also on the influence of the complementary color scheme of

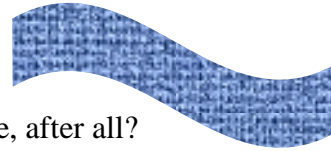
red and green According to Kandinsky, "...in all diametrically opposed colors, green was the ideal balance in the mixture of the two: the movements destroyed themselves and rest ensued. Against green he set red. Both together were motionless-giving rise to the third great contrast."  Finally, Kandinsky's last pair involves the secondary subtractive colors resulting from blending the primary colors of the first pair, blue and yellow, with the third primary, red. Fourth contrast:  : same moments as yellow and blue, "but in weakened form" (Kaiser-Schuster 398).

Kandinsky's color theories exemplify a pattern in many such analyses, both at the Bauhaus and elsewhere. While there is a desire and effort to approach such systems using scientific methods and objective data, there is often, if not always, an impulse towards a more personal/cultural subjectivity in using and describing color. For Kandinsky and others at the Bauhaus, there was a very personal and spiritual side to the study and use of formal aesthetic elements that went beyond, perhaps even informed the role of aesthetics in "good" design. Using formal elements (such as color) well, meant the resulting designs would be both artistically and functionally viable, offering transcendent pleasures to both creator and viewer in creating subjective associative impressions, from the combination and juxtaposition of elements.

Regardless of its composition, the ability of color to evoke vivid associations and provoke visceral responses in the viewer and creator alike makes it one of the most important elements to consider in composition. Thus, Kandinsky's blue, like the skies, recedes in infinite perspective, a vastness as profound and moving as the heavens.

On a lighter note, it is this consideration of color composition that comes into play whenever I purchase, or select from my drawer, a pair of blue jeans. Blue jeans, there's

nothing like a perfectly broken in pair of blue jeans. LEVI'S are the best, but as long as they are properly worn, other brands can do. It's not just the wear of the fabric that makes them so comfortable; I'm convinced that the color has something to do with it. Black jeans, although sleek, really don't have the same effect on me. And jeans of other colors just never quite fit the same. Even the "latest" unwashed look lacks the proper beginning shade to ever reach the optimal hue. I'm not talking stone washing or other such fads. I mean the SOFTandSMOOTHandCOOL blue of a pair worn hard and true. It's a color one can recognize in an instant, the fit and feel of an old friend. Indigo's destiny is the shade of a precision faded, optimally worn pair of jeans.



Perhaps there's something to Kandinsky's blue, after all?

Exercise Five: Do you have a favorite piece of clothing? What color is it? In figurative terms, what shape is the color? Create a picture that honors this color and shape(s). In attitude, you're aiming for a tribute that is sort of like my narrative ode to indigo above, but by means of a visual composition. Although your composition may, of course, be monochromatic, consider how color contrast (like those Kandinsky theorized) can help you highlight and enhance the color and shape(s) you are honoring. For example, below I use color contrast to enhance my comparison of

nighttime and morning

moonlight and sunlight

land, sea, and sky

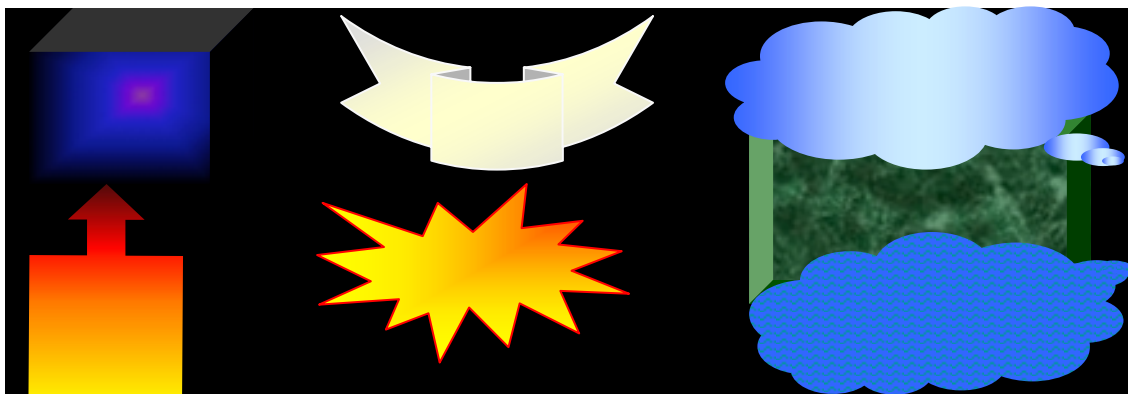
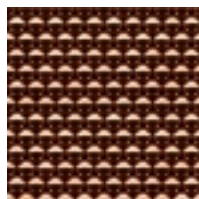


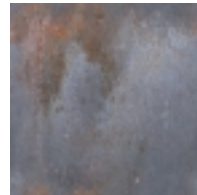
Figure 43. Exercise Five Illustration.

As we peer into the night sky, we can almost see the coming dawn.
 A slow descent of yellowed moonlight, as the sun begins its ruby climb.
 A clear sky reflected in the sea's calm, and the emerald sight of land spurs us on.

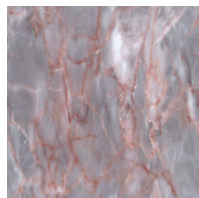
D. In my attempt to explain color, I have once again anticipated the next element we will discuss, which is texture. Generally speaking, texture is “the characteristic physical structure given to a material, an object, etc., by the size, shape, arrangement, and proportions of its parts (“texture,” def. 2). In terms of the arts, it is “the characteristic visual and tactile quality of the surface of a work of art resulting from the way in which the materials are used,” (“texture,” def. 4a), or “the imitation of the tactile quality of represented objects” (“texture,” def. 4b). Materials can include glass, wood, metals, paper, textiles, and so on and so forth. Textures can range from smooth to rough, matte to glossy, and soft to hard.



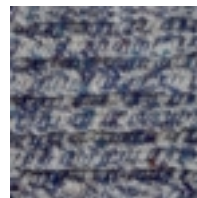
Glossy:
 Having a luster or shine



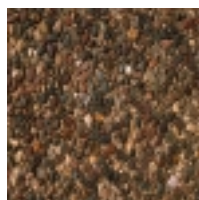
Matte:
 Having a dull surface



Hard:
 Not soft; solid and firm to the touch; unyielding to pressure and impenetrable or almost impenetrable



Soft:
 Yielding readily to touch or pressure; easily penetrated, divided, or changed in shape; not hard or stiff



Rough:
 Having a coarse or uneven surface, as from projections, irregularities, or breaks; not smooth



Smooth:
 Free from projections or graininess of surface; not rough to the touch

Figure 44. Textures.

Do you recall Josef Albers’ analysis of the paper project he asked his students to do in the preliminary course at the Bauhaus? (see page 59) His ideas can be directly traced to the original teacher of the course, Johannes Itten, and Albers’ co-instructor,

Laszlo Maholy-Nagy. Although Itten, Maholy-Nagy, and Albers taught texture differently, their aim was the same in so far as they all wanted to equip students with a sensory knowledge of the functional qualities found in different materials, and how they might manipulate those qualities in creative works. Collage, or the interweaving of materials, was one of the composition methods they used to explore and experiment with texture. Collage tested the students' "creativity, our sense of form, and our feeling for the combination of different textures" (quoted in Dearstyne 85).

Below, both Itten and Moholy-Nagy substantiate these aims.

Itten

"As an introduction, long lists of different materials such as wood, glass, textiles, bark, pelts, metal and stone were recorded. Then I had the optical and tactile qualities of these materials assessed. It was not enough simply to recognize the qualities, the characteristics of the materials had to be experienced and described. Contrasts such as smooth-rough, hard-soft and light-heavy not only had to be seen, but also had to be felt. Developing on this, they systematized the qualities of differing textures in ranges of materials. [...] This was the basis for the free collages using materials. (quoted in Schmitz 365).

Triadic Ballet costumes, Lantern Festival, Kite festival, Metallic Party, Metal Dance, Dance with Glass Rods,

Moholy-Nagy

structure: the unchangeable way the material structure was built = internal construction
texture: the organically developed final exterior surfaces of every structure = natural surface
fracture: the way it appears, the sensorily perceptible impact (impression) or the work process which shows itself in every aspect of the material's handling, in other words the surface of the externally altered material (its artificial epidermis) = artificially prepared surface
 For the design-process the third aspect is perhaps the most significant." (quoted in Schmitz 370-37)

A focused study and use of textures teach students to utilize materials ways that are creative and functional, in keeping with the special properties of each element. It also serves a practical function, urging students to conserve resources by using them efficiently. Given the financial restrictions of the Bauhaus at this time, conservation of materials was a key necessity, although it certainly would be proactive of us to act similarly today.

Based solidly in the Bauhaus tradition, Calder advances a similar credo regarding texture. In sum, each material is embedded with its own code for use in design. This code can be accessed by understanding the elementary and expressive attributes of the material.

A knowledge of, and sympathy with, the qualities of the materials used are essential to proper treatment.

Stone, the most ancient, should be kept massive, not cut into ribbons. The strength must be retained.

Bronze, cast, serves well for slender, attenuated shapes. It is strong even when very slender.

Wood has a grain which must be reckoned with. It can be slender in one direction only.

Wire, rods, sheet metal have strength, even in very attenuated forms, and respond quickly to whatever sort of work one may subject them to. Contrasts in mass or weight are feasible, too, according to the gauge, or to the kind of metal used, so that physical laws, as well as aesthetic concepts, can be held to. There is of course a close alliance between physics and aesthetics (Calder, "A Propos").

Donald Barthelme further expands upon this theme of texture in his witty insights on the textures man's structures in his book, Paradise. Explicitly, he is referring to the evaluation of material properties-- their qualities, strengths, and weaknesses in design--by the protagonist, an architect on sabbatical.

Bridges should not be painted blue, Simon thought, the horrible Izod blue of the Ben Franklin bridge in Philadelphia ever in his mind. Concrete, he felt, wonderfully useful and wonderfully ugly, should never be seen in public unless covered with ivy, or, better still, wallpaper. Steel was pretty, he did not know why. Brick was good and wood best, for all purposes under the sun. As a student he had submitted a project to redo Rockefeller Center in pickled pine. He had also, on formal occasions, worn a dog collar instead of a tie, most *sportif*. (36)

Implicitly, he further seems to note a sort of related emotive quality attributable to the use and function of texture, not just in design materials, but also in terms of

personal expression in those design choices through action and language.

Exercise Six: Select any one of the compositions you have created to this point. Translate it to a collage of textures. That is, create a new picture using any materials you might find about your home or yard.

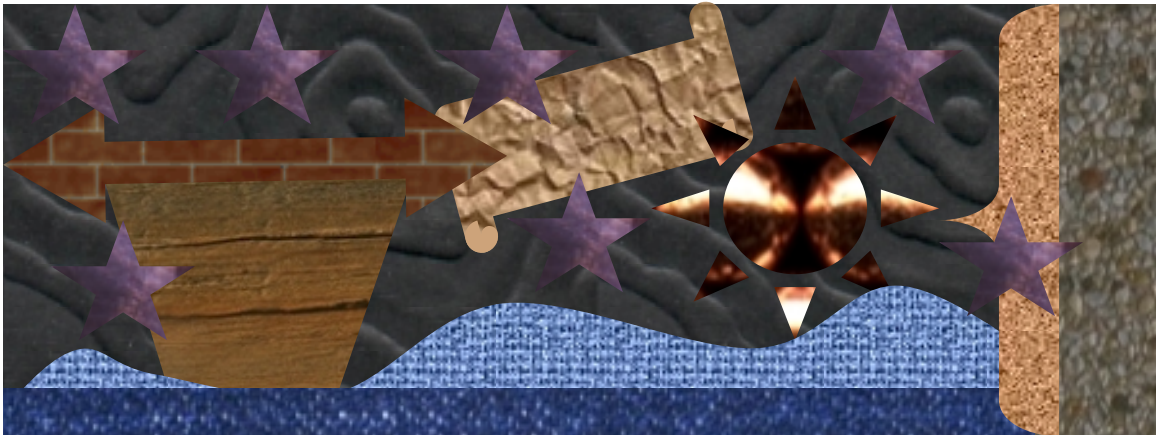


Figure 45. Exercise Six Illustration.

We plot a course to distant shores.
As stable shoulders draw our oars.
And draw a chart from ship to stars.
The cut through blackness leaves no scars.

V. How does formal aesthetics ask us to compose and view works? In composing or viewing a work using formal aesthetics, one bases their understanding in the fundamental elements of the composition. These elements contain certain recognizable properties that aid in organizing the work. Through an informed analysis of the formal elements, one can “make sense” of a composition. The fundamental elements are based in certain natural laws or principles, which carry implicit meanings. For example, a series of diagonal lines evokes a sense of unbalance and motion in the direction of the lines’ gravitational pull. Gravity, of course, is the natural law or principle in this case, and it is our shared experiential response to gravity that prompts the sensation of motion or unbalance. In supplying or interpreting formal, the focus should be on their fundamental

effect as compared to, for instance, the expectation that they create an illusion of (verisimilitude) reality. They are not expressive of something else; rather, they express their own sensuality—e.g., unbalance. The goal then is abstraction, a pure expression of formal composition, where the chosen elements comprise not just the vehicle but the content of the image produced.

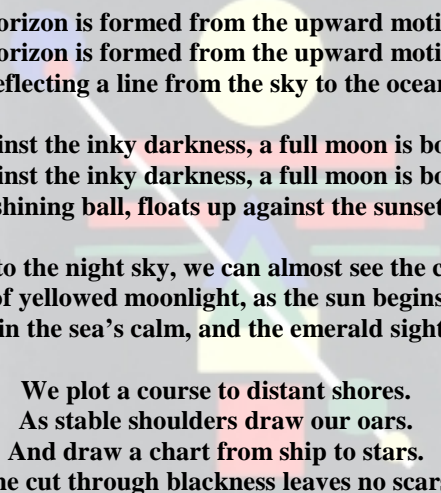
So, how is formal aesthetics different or similar to other ways we might compose or view a work? Although works based on representational forms and conventions contain the basic elements of formal composition, they are composed so as to shift the focus to the particularities of social, cultural, or psychological construction and meaning. For instance, veris-realistic stagings tend to particularize characters (e.g., their physique, costume, movement, verbal acts) to such a degree that should a more abstract setting be used, it reads as mere decoration for the human dynamic. This goes for the plastic arts as well as theater. For instance, in Edvard Munch's The Scream, the orange and black background evokes the inner turmoil of the screaming figure in the foreground. Music has its own set of formal composition elements which have certain generalized effects on perception and interpretation. Musical elements, through combination and contrast, comprise an emotive language of universal recognition akin to formal aesthetic elements.

Oskar Schlemmer and the Bauhaus stage Workshop further extend to us a sense of the play of possibilities in the use of formal aesthetics. The Bauhaus performances and festivals created a space/place where playful experimentation with abstraction and formalism was the norm. In other words, for the Bauhaus, because formal aesthetics are so basic or “simple,” they excite creative possibilities that extend beyond the limitations of realist particularities. Schlemmer offers,

“The formula for the Bauhaus theater is very simple: as few prejudices as possible; regard the world as if it had just been created; don't think things to

death, let them develop gradually, freely in their own way; be simple, but not poor; too simple is better than elaborate or pompous; be witty rather than sentimental. [...] Begin with elementary things. Start with the point, line and simple surfaces; start with the construction of simple surfaces, with the body and simple colors like red, blue and yellow, black white and gray. Begin with materials; feel the different textures of glass, metal, wood, and then assimilate them. Begin with space, its laws and mysteries, and let yourself be 'bewitched' by them. Begin with the positions of the body, from the simple presence to the positions of standing, walking and finally leaping and dancing. To take a step, raise a hand or even wiggle a finger is an adventure." (quoted in Baker 48)

Exercise Seven: Select any one of your compositions and exchange it for one composed by a classmate. Draw on the formal aesthetic lessons you have learned today to interpret the picture. Remember to base your interpretation in the elements. Let them speak for themselves, to start anyway. Then, if you'd like, proceed to interpret the composition drawing on secondary associations. One way to do this might be to write a story or poem about your experience and interpretation of the picture. Share both the primary and secondary interpretations with the student who composed the picture.



**A horizon is formed from the upward motion.
A horizon is formed from the upward motion.
Reflecting a line from the sky to the ocean.**

**Against the inky darkness, a full moon is born.
Against the inky darkness, a full moon is born.
A bright shining ball, floats up against the sunset's storm.**

**As we peer into the night sky, we can almost see the coming dawn.
A slow descent of yellowed moonlight, as the sun begins its ruby climb.
A clear sky reflected in the sea's calm, and the emerald sight of land spurs us on.**

**We plot a course to distant shores.
As stable shoulders draw our oars.
And draw a chart from ship to stars.
The cut through blackness leaves no scars.**

Figure 46. Exercise Seven Illustration.

VI. What are the ramifications and limitations of formal aesthetics? After all our games, we now arrive at the big "So what?" question implicit to most critical inquiries. Our focus here is on the advantages and disadvantages of using formalism to compose

and view works. Involved here is the charge by critics that a formal aesthetic perspective ignores the work's social codes, contexts, and rhetoric.

Formal aesthetics offer images of immediate appeal. The brain spontaneously organizes data into simple patterns according to certain perceptual laws. Seeing is a process of ordering the constant flow of information with certain biologically formed perceptual frames. If one understands the first order associations, based on natural laws, one has access to an elementary language with which she or he may craft individual artistic expressions. Reducing particularities to the shared elements and qualities of science and natural design offers the composer or viewer a framework to guide the discovery and manipulative play of not only the elements but also the particularities of life. Further, like building blocks, the “simple” or elemental language can be tailored to express a more personal lexicon.

A disadvantage of formal aesthetics arises when one desires more culture-specific signs and codes. In this case, aesthetics must be supplemented with more culturally explicit references. Another problem in formal aesthetic compositions is the tendency of both artist and viewer to impose secondary cultural associations upon a composition, which elides the primary associations of the elements. This is not to say that other values cannot be referenced; rather, that the universality of natural associations is not referenced. It is undermined by other interpretive systems or discourses that are no more or less limiting than formal aesthetics.

The formal aesthetic practice is a tool to be utilized and studied, by the artist to compose more structured compositions that can stand on their own logic of design, and by the viewer to comprehend the aesthetics of works separate from the secondary associations which might become a part of the process of creation and interpretation. It is

a language that can be spoken and translated through an understanding of its visual signs and codes. There are certain features of visual elements, such as line, color, shape and texture that produce certain first order associations in the receptive process. Seeing is a process of ordering the visual elements into simple patterns of recognition. This process is not learned, but spontaneous or natural. Language is also a process of ordering the influx of information received, but language is a learned process that is based on symbolic associations between what is sensed and the words used to describe it. I believe a complication arises when we try to verbally articulate the visual language of indexical association. The universals of formal aesthetics are often read in terms of secondary social and cultural associations through language.

The Performance of the “Bauhaus Stage Dessau” at the Frankfurt Schauspielhaus on April 20, 1929. A Review by Benno Reifenberg

“Over the entrance is written in sans-serif type: *arts and crafts*. We are of the opinions that this way of being radical, which hopes to get at “the laws” in such an open and direct manner, must be termed a poor way of being radical. For these laws-of space for instance, or of surface composition or of color as such-are unreal to us, if in order to recognize them, we must first juggle away the human being. Why should we be concerned with a space in which, instead of human bodies, there are cubes sprawled all over? To be honest: you can keep that space. [...]

The true radical, it seems to us, never forgets the dialectic of law and man. The only road is the one through the human heart. Whatever is not on that road remains for all eternity nothing but empty formalism.” (quoted in Dearstyne 159)

If Reifenberg had waited a few decades to read this review of Bauhaus reconstructions...

Figure 47. Contrasting (Re)Views of Aesthetics.(Figure Continued)

Sixty Years Old, but Still Looks New: Reconstructing Cubo-Futurist, Constructivist, and Bauhaus Theatre Piece. An article by Rob Baker (1984)

Why do these ideas continue to intrigue a new generation of audiences? Partly because at their best such experiments can still [...] “unnerve us, like a cold shower”-- and make us see all art and theater in a new and valuable way. But also because they derive from the age old hope that somehow art-- or more precisely, a synthesis of the best and purest in all the arts (music, painting, sculpture, architecture, poetry, dance) -- can take us beyond anything we have ever experienced. [...]

Unification, abstraction, and standardization of form [...] were not seen as ends in themselves but as means of bringing about a more equal society in which many different kinds of creativity would flourish (as in the crafts guilds of the medieval times), so that individuals could “take the same fundamental components and create many different things.”(Baker 48 and 84)

As a tool, formal aesthetics can be practiced, played with and, once understood, the restrictions and possibilities of the various elements used to craft expressions of one’s aim and choice. The universality and simplicity of the elements allows for the diversity of applications. In fact, formal aesthetics offers a democratic and communal tool of and for visual expression. Since we all have the innate ability to organize visual data in terms of abstracted elements of form, we all have access to the same signifying codes for composition and comprehension. Formalism is ultimately a digital system imposed upon visual and spatial analogues, but it is one that is rooted in common perceptual processes.

It is the divine attribute of the imagination, that when the real world is shut out it can create a world for itself, and with a necromantic power can conjure up glorious shapes and forms, and brilliant visions to make solitude populous, and irradiate the gloom of a dungeon. (Irving)

The use of formal elements to craft the visual message of a work opens up alternate creative possibilities. It provides us with another “language” with which to

articulate content. We need these grids of thought in order to filter the constant streams of data we experience, and to recognize the patterns of creation from which nature constantly arises. In the application of the resulting forms, we discover a virtually endless stream of ways to represent our knowledge and feelings about the world. The Bauhaus offers the key to a very special code that allows us to both decipher the streaming flow of reality and create our own language for speaking the imagination.

CHAPTER SEVEN EMBRACING PLAY

You are not alone. Everyone is playing these games. Everyone I know....The business men are playing Daddy Warbucks games, the Lost Horse game for example, in order to establish patterns that will enable them to mangle the competition. The military men are playing war games, example, in order to alternate responses of the enemy. And enemies, for all I are playing and some people checkers. And says that games are our psychological release for in social groups. that the play civilizing function, agonistic principle with a ludic play. (Barthelme, Enemies of Beauty, Amanda Said" 74-



Escalation for test the efficacy of to the provocations to make new know. The scientists scientific games, are playing plain old Marshall McLuhan dramatic modes of lives, providing particular tensions And Huizinga says element serves a combining an of competitiveness principle, or pure "Games are the Truth, and Sleep, 75).

Figure 48. Calder's Ringmaster from "Circus" Webpage.



My whole theory about art is the disparity that exists between form, masses and movement. (Calder quoted in Baer 491)

Figure 49. Arp, Jean. Constellation with Five White Forms and Two Black, Variation III 1932.

CHAPTER EIGHT

GAME WITH BUILDING BLOCKS

In this chapter I describe and interpret the Bauhaus performance, Dance with Cubes or Game with Building Blocks. The dance is an experiment concerning the interdependent effect of color on line and shape in space. My first step is to call on the theatrical staging vernacular of “blocking” to “block,” and thereby describe, the performance. Involved here is creating a script that details the stage space or setting and the “characters,” their costumes, props, and movement in and through space. My script and “blocking” are based on first- and second-hand accounts and reviews by various theorists, practitioners, and critics.

My next step is to interpret the performance and by means of performative writing choices that evoke the original aesthetic experiment and its effect on the audience, as I interpret it anyway. In brief, Dance with Cubes tells a delightful and simple (though not simplistic) story that replicates or “cites” the activity of children playing a “game with [colored] building blocks.” By means of play, the “building blocks” of color theory vis a vis their composition are learned and taught.

As discussed in Chapter Two, I apply the citational and evocative tools from my performative writing graph to provide a description and analysis of Dance with Cubes. I cite Dr. Seuss’ rhyming nonsense verse, full of repetition, juxtaposition, and (re) combination of as a means of evoking these similar features applied to color in Dance with Cubes. Additionally, I evoke the nature of (re) constructive play through a “lesson” in making and using tangrams, a seven pieced geometric puzzle cut from one square, which can be formed into endless combinations and configurations. Both methods combined fund my understanding of the importance of “nonsense” play as an

investigative learning tool. The repetition and reconfiguration of elements, be they words, shapes, colors, or other elemental “building blocks,” is an effective educational method providing knowledge and comprehension of forms through an affective game of whimsical creation.

**DANCE WITH CUBES
OR GAME WITH BUILDING BLOCKS**
By Oskar Schlemmer and the Bauhaus Theater Workshop
(Re) constructed by Lisa Flanagan

Cast of Characters

- Three Performers/Dancers:** wearing white tights, black shorts, one black knee pad high on left leg, dance slippers, white gloves and white skullcaps on heads. Two performers in white face, rosy-cheeked mime makeup; the other in an oblong gold metallic mask with black accents (Fiedler and Feierabend 542). Or are they all in white padded suits and metallic masks of silver, gold, and copper (Moynihan 54-55)?
- Blocks:** wooden cubes, of various sizes (Fiedler and Feierabend 542) **or** even sized plastic cubes (Moynihan 56, Baker 86), painted in primary colors, including the additive primary green, and black and white; one color along each face (Fiedler and Feierabend 542).
- Musicians:** A percussion band provides colorful theme music to accompany the building games on stage.
- Audience:** watching the game in color on the cube (Figure 50).

On a black stage an overhead white light dims up over center stage. The lighting reveals a bare stage except for the “a wall of multicolored blocks, from behind which, three figures crawled. Piece by piece they dismantled the wall, carrying each block to another area of the stage” (Goldberg Performance Art 119).

Lights dim up over the three main areas of each performer’s building game, (DR) down right, (C) center and (UL) up left. As the performers begin to play with the blocks, a percussion band uses woodblocks, gongs, and cowbells to play a syncopated score that accentuates the movements of the dancers. This music continues throughout the dance, getting progressively louder and more complex.

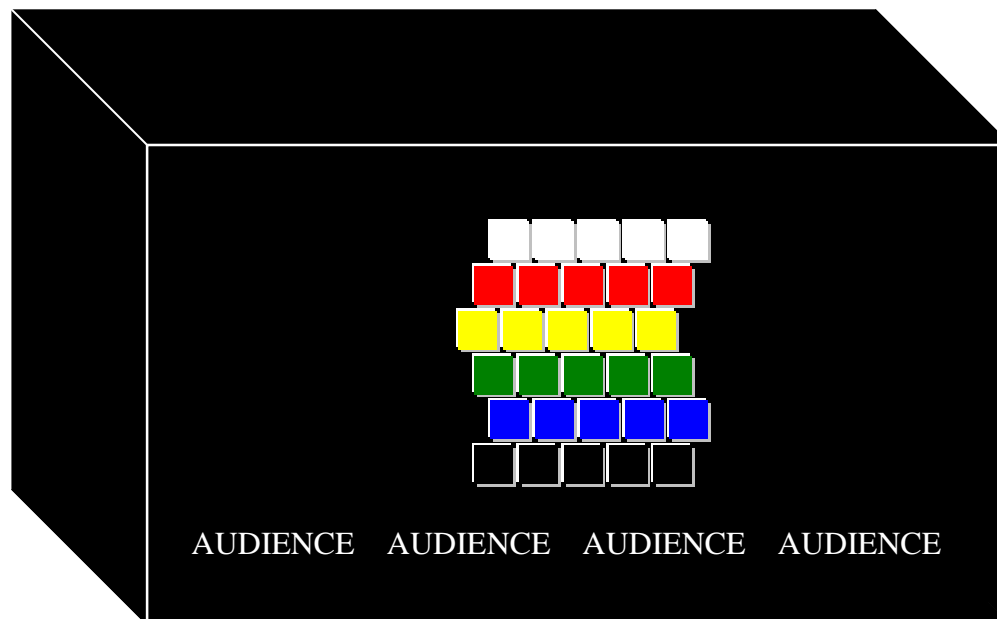


Figure 50. Initial Stage Blocking.

The dancers' positions on stage form a diagonal from DR to UL. DR dancer composes a chair of yellow blocks, complete with footrest. C dancer makes a divan in blue blocks. UL performer constructs a high back throne in red (Figure 51).

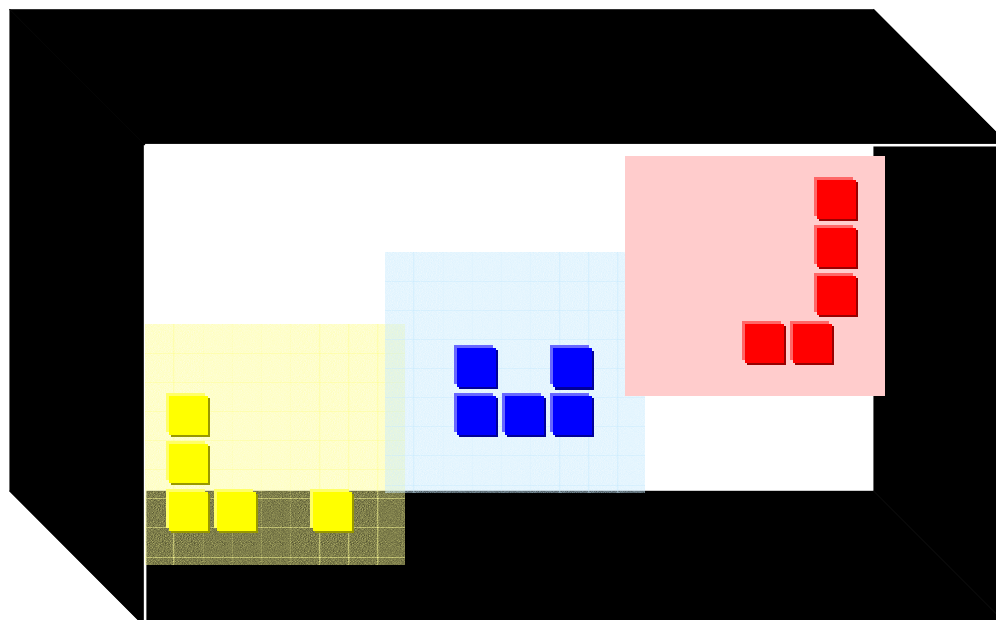


Figure 51. Second Stage Blocking.

DR yellow and C blue notice one another and begin to play together. They lay out blocks in their respective colors and so as to meet on the (DR-UL) diagonal line that runs between them.

They cap either end of the line with small seats two blocks high, with footrests, and sit down on their color seats (Figure 52). They notice UL red on his high back throne and cross over to him. UL red resists completing the DR-UL but, after much harassing, UL red falls in line. C blue removes his upper seat block and gives it to DR yellow. C blue crosses UL toward UL red who is moving his blocks down. C blue has become the foreman on the job, directing the others from UC.

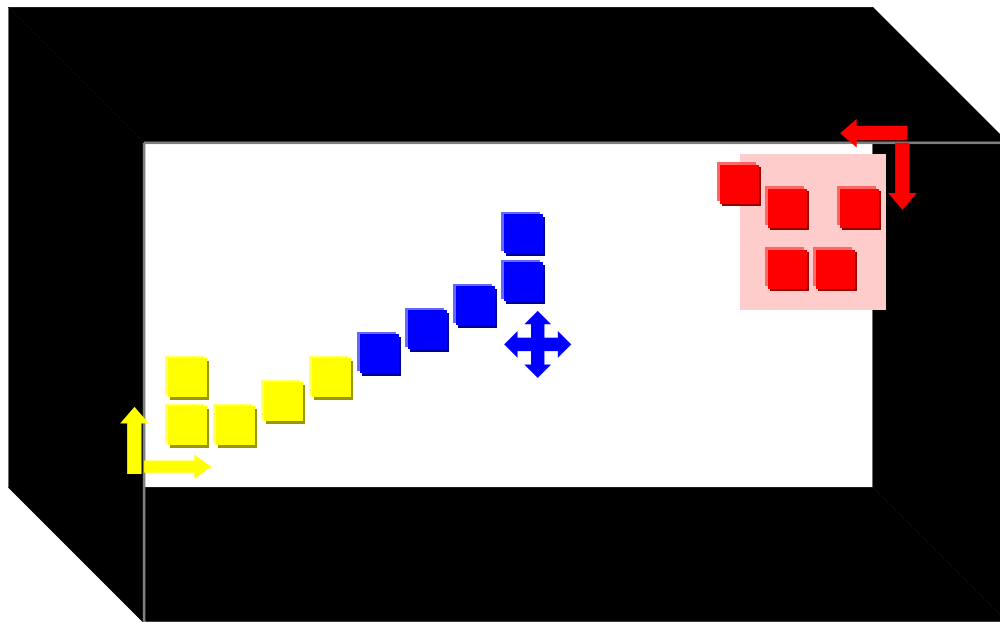


Figure 52. Third Stage Blocking.

Once the performers have established the DR-UL line, UL red and DR yellow push the blocks together on C blue's command. They then move it from a diagonal to horizontal position on stage (Figure 53).

As they move inwards toward C and C blue, DR yellow and UL red turn the blocks so that they alternate black and white on the front face. The line of blocks becomes a horizontal checkerboard with a red top (Figure 54).

On C blue's command and in a clockwise motion, DR yellow and UL red rotate the line of blocks from a horizontal, to diagonal, to vertical axis, and then back to horizontal again.

The dancers then toss the blocks to one another forming different colored groupings, depending on which faces of the blocks are showing. Then they begin to build a

monument C stage. UL red uses eight blocks, DR yellow uses four, and C blue uses the remaining three blocks.

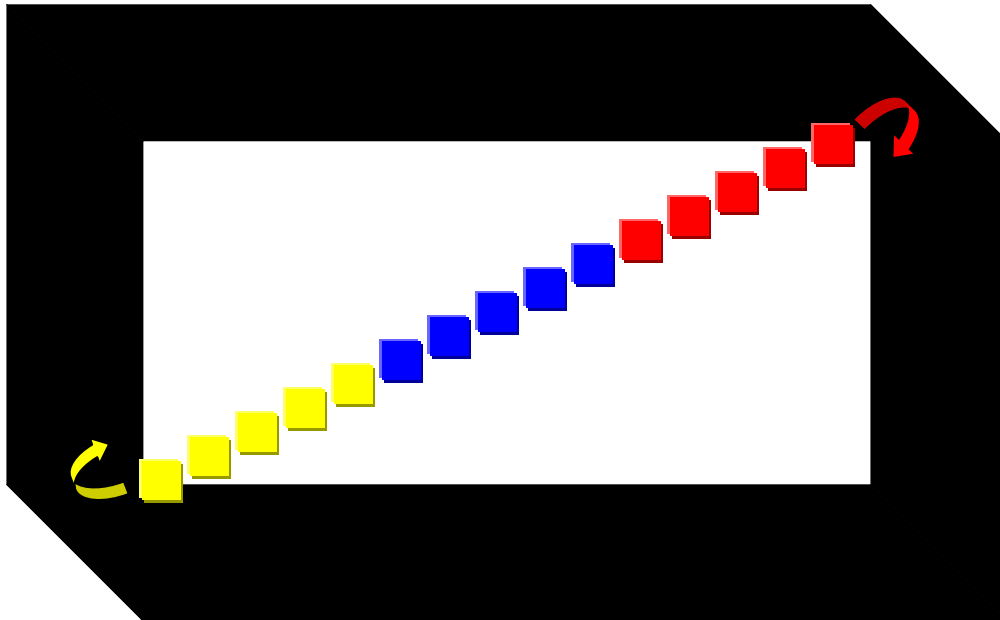


Figure 53. Fourth Stage Blocking.

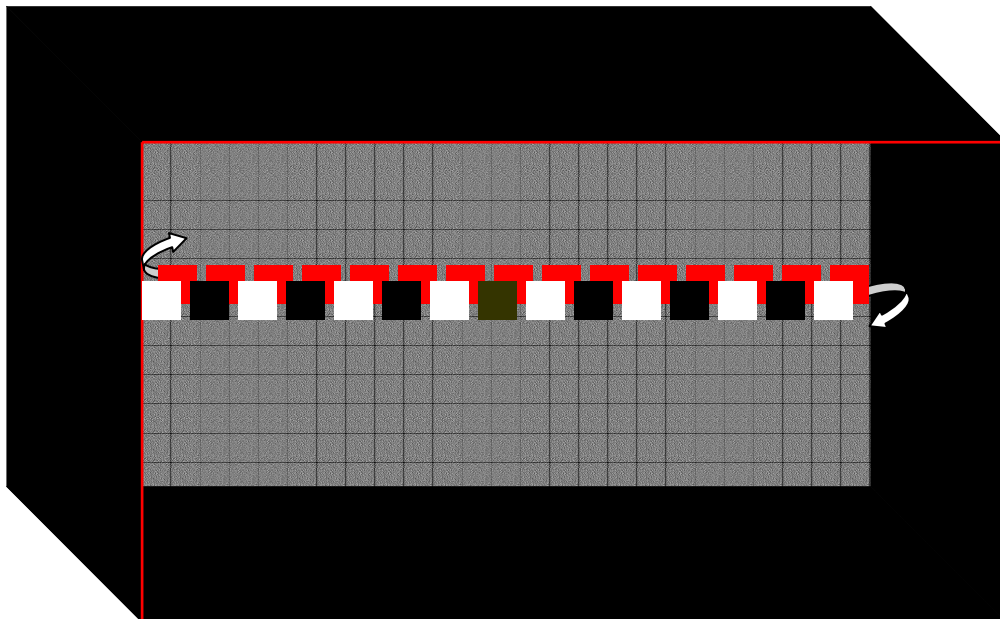


Figure 54. Fifth Stage Blocking.

At the bottom of the monument, UL red makes a yellow-sided box out of four blocks. Then, he puts another block on top, turned on a slight diagonal. C blue makes another

yellow-sided box out of two more blocks, the top block turned on a slight diagonal. He then puts a block, with the yellow face forward, on top of this. DR yellow adds two more blocks on top, green faces forward, one on top of the other. In quick succession, the performers place the remaining blocks, one on top of the other, atop the green blocks. These top blocks have a blue face angled forward (Figure 55).

The dancers then lie on their stomachs in positions relative to their initial positions onstage. DR yellow is R of the building, C is UC, and UL red is L. Then they begin to rotate the monument with their hands, revealing the other faces on the blocks as the structure turns.

After one full rotation, the performers crawl backwards off the stage. DR yellow crawls R, UL red, L, and C blue exits UC. As the dancers exit, the lights fade to black and the music crescendos to a stop.

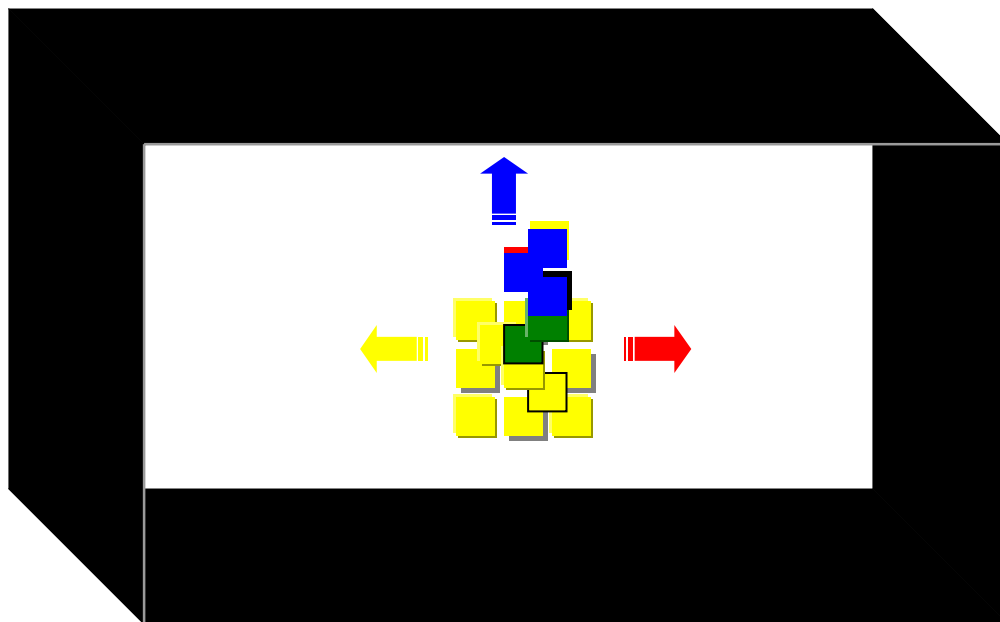


Figure 55. Sixth Stage Blocking.

This dance is a living game of theory in which the performers and audience access, investigate, and play with color, line, and shape within the stage plane(s) of the stage space. Thereby, the performance event reflects Oskar Schlemmer's notion that, "Shape and color are the tools of the creative designer, space and man are the polar components around which the world of the stage revolves. Let us watch what space,

shape and color can do to influence man” (quoted in Neumann 169). Apparently, man explores, experiments, and invents, asking: What happens to a shape when the colors of its observable faces are shifted? What happens to a line of color when moved along its axis? What is the effect of a quick manipulation of blocks into different patterns of form and color? How does the performer influence how we read such play? And, what’s with those cowbells?

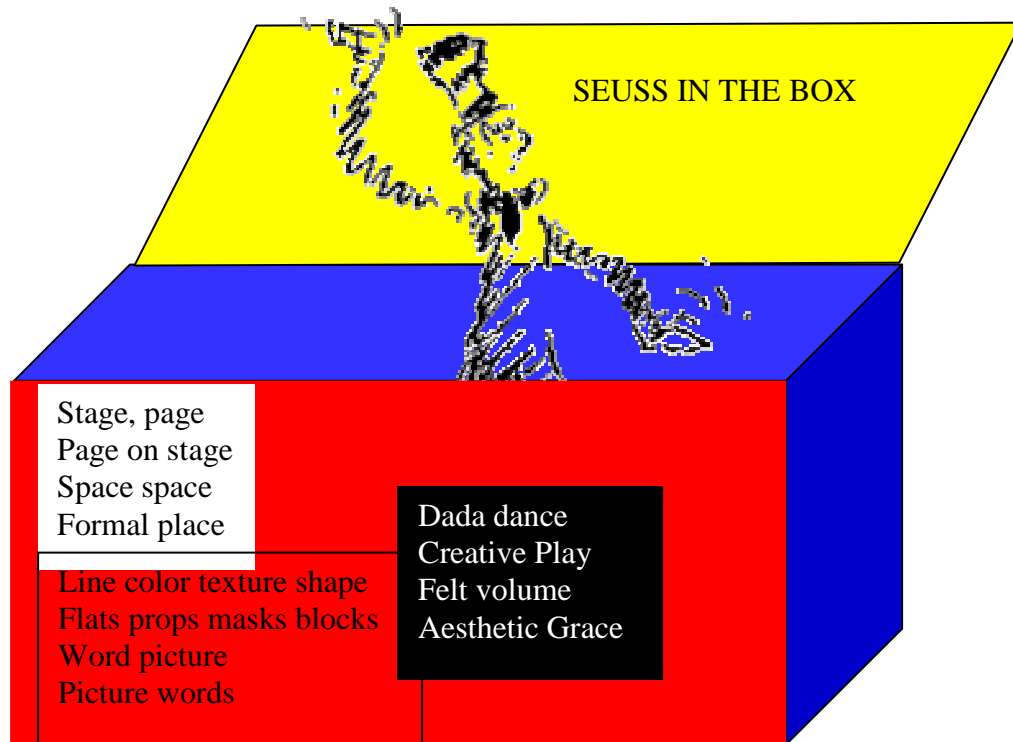
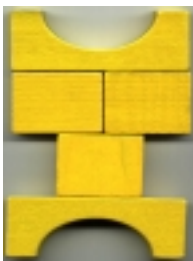


Figure 56. Theseussis/Seuthesis Experiment

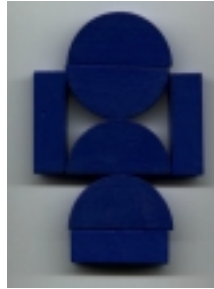
Block Dance: A Seussian Analysis



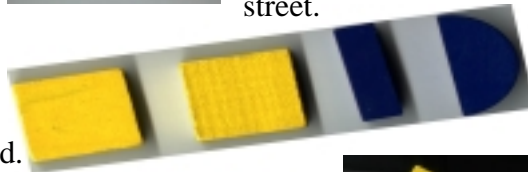
A yellow man comes briskly to town.
 He’s energetic, powerful, hardly slows down.
 He builds a lazy boy home life that suits him right.
 Then, puts up his feet to enjoy the sites.
 When he looks around, what does he see?

Figure 57. Block Dance Illustration. (Figure Continued)

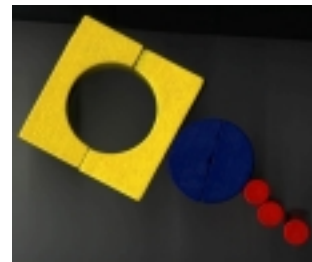
A prim blue man in a Victorian
 Who sits square in the middle,
 Blue man seems centered,
 When yellow and blue finally
 They decide to unite and build a
 Their places rest on either end.



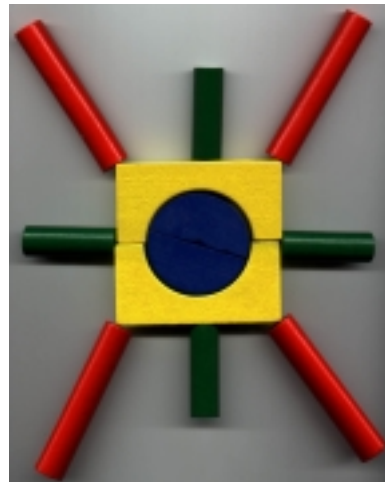
seat.
 neither left nor right.
 attentive and bright.
 meet.
 street.



The path they share leads to a friend.
 As they share the view down their common lane.
 They search for ways to extend their range.
 They notice the red man all alone.
 He never seems to leave his throne.
 Yellow and blue go to meet sir red.



He wants nothing to do with what's in their heads.
 Red sees no reason to join
 His lofty passions suit him
 Blue tells the others, life's
 What they really need is a
 With a green lacking envy
 And form a pinwheel
 A tower to unite their



their designs.
 fine.
 not black or white.
 little light.
 they'll unite.
 circling bright.
 energy and passions.



A primary rainbow of spiraling fashion.

"I like nonsense, it wakes up the brain cells. Fantasy is a necessary ingredient in living, it's a way of looking at life through the wrong end of a telescope. Which is what I do, and that enables you to laugh at life's realities." (Dr. Seuss quoted in "Cyber Seuss")

The performers use the formal components and to build a series of structures or compositions that communicate primary and secondary associations. For instance, the distinct color and design of each seat is reflected in the temperament of the designer and user of the seat. Further, conflict is played out in terms of color and form. At first at odds, they become more integrated and intense as they work to create linear, then multidimensional color structures that move through and activate the space that contains them. In turn, the performers' bodies become charged with the dynamics of the interrelation of elements they are composing. The total effect is that of a system, a closed world that evokes the nexus of geometry, hue, and kinetics. The system constantly (re) articulates the (inter) active experience that such elements can evoke for the participant and viewer of formal play.

Red skies at night
 Under a blood red sky
 Little red corvet
 Red red wine goes to my head
 Blue skies smiling at me
 Devil with a blue dress on
 Forever in blue jeans
 Blue Moon
 Don't eat the yellow snow.
 They call me mellow yellow, that's right...
 We all live in a Yellow Submarine
 Itsy Bitsy teeny weenie yellow polka dot bikini

Figure 58. Colorful Expressions. (Figure Continued)

What's black and white and red all over? A newspaper. A zebra with a nose bleed. Or was it in a blender? I think that's a different joke.

"[my] theory of technique, if I have one, is very far from original; nor is it complicated. I can express it in fifteen words, by quoting The Eternal Question And Immortal Answer of burlesk, viz. "Would you hit a woman with a child? - No, I'd hit her with a brick." Like the burlesk comedian, I am abnormally fond of that precision which creates movement.' (Cummings quoted in "Forward, is 5")



I've got the Green Acres theme song stuck in my head....

Figure 59. Colorful Directions.

Moving right along, it is now time for you to translate color play on the stage to performance on the page! The two main elements you will need are shape and color. To launch your exploration, you want to make a tangram set which is a kind of puzzle. David Schulman explains,

Although the tangram is related to the jigsaw puzzle in that pieces are jumbled up and put together again, there the relationship ends. A jigsaw puzzle consists of many convoluted, frequently arbitrarily shaped pieces that fit together in only one way to make a predetermined configuration. But fitting the seven jumbled tangram pieces together to form the original square is only one of the many possibilities. The tangram has only seven simple geometric shapes, but these can be used to form an almost infinite variety of configurations, and to pose several types of challenges for both adults and children. [...]

The seven little geometric shapes can be arranged to make whimsical animals or human portraits. They can be combined to make delicately graceful shapes or amusing caricatures, to represent real objects or purely abstract designs. Making these configurations requires intuition, artistic vision, and imagination. For this reason, tangram play is a good way to stimulate a child's creativity. [...] On a more abstract level, many adults are fascinated by the paradox apparent in forming symmetrical configurations from an odd number of pieces, and amazed at the subtleness with which curves and details can be suggested where in actuality there are none.

A tangram- the word refers to both the pieces of the puzzle and to any configuration made with them- consists of seven pieces. These pieces, or tans, are made from one square, which is cut to yield two small triangles, one medium-sized triangle, two large triangles, one square, and one rhomboid. (Shulman 13:1660)

The materials you need to make a tangram set are some kind of sturdy material out of which you'll cut the pieces. You might use particleboard, plywood or heavy cardboard. The thicker the material, the sharper the utensil you need to cut it. Given the above-noted materials you might need a saw or utility knife. If you want smooth edges, use sandpaper. You also will also need a ruler and pencil to measure and mark the cutting lines of the pieces, and paints for the finished product. I made my tangram sets out of shrinky dink. They are relatively inexpensive, can be cut with a good pair of scissors, and painted before baking. They also are just fun to use. Further, shrinky dinks are easy for kids to handle, so they can actually help in designing and making the tangrams.

To make your tangram set, first mark the cutting lines on the material, using the directions in Figure 60. When you cut out the pieces, try to keep the edges straight. Sand the edges, if necessary. If you want to paint the tangram I suggest you do so before you cut the pieces. Afterwards, you can touch up the edges. If you are using shrinky dinks, be sure to paint and cut them before baking. Follow the directions for baking on the package, being sure to put them on a flat tray, so they don't warp.

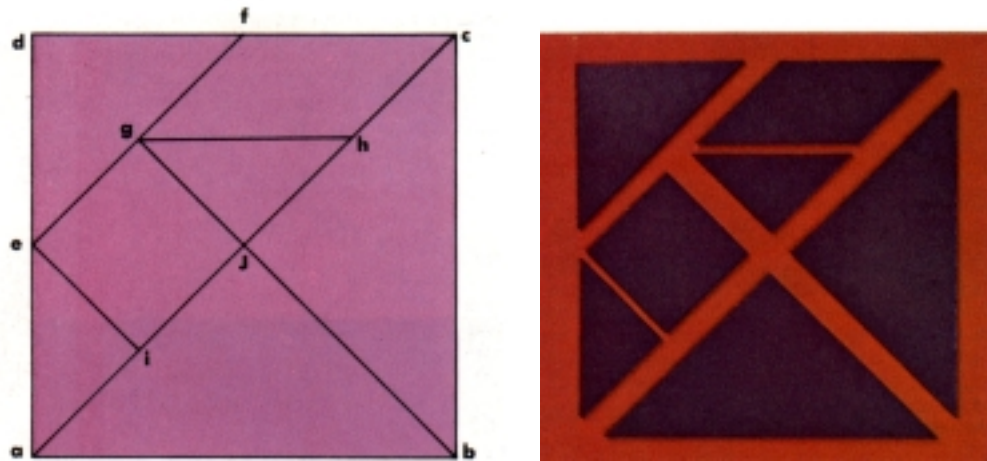


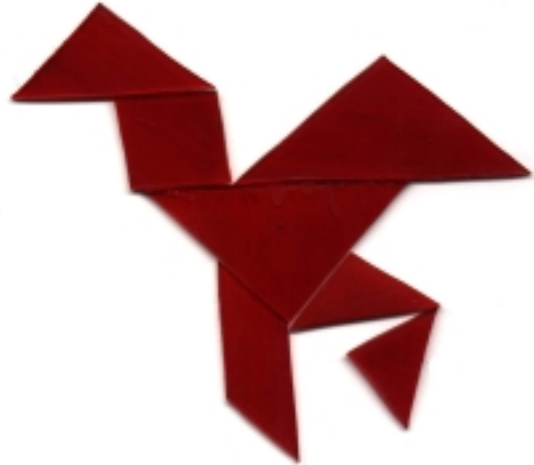
Figure 60. Tangram Design.

Use a pencil and ruler to mark the cutting lines as follows: Bisect lines a-d and c-d, and draw line e-f to connect these points. Place the ruler diagonally across (from point d to point b) and draw line g-b. Draw a diagonal line connecting points a and c. Divide line a-c into quarters, and draw line g-h and line e-i. (Schulman 13:1660)

This tangram set... is arranged to show the square from which the seven pieces were cut. These simple shapes can be arranged to form a surprisingly large number of different images. (Schulman 13:1660)

One reason I was so inspired to try and make a set of tans is because of the pink color used in the example (Figure 60). That pink conjured up images of lawn art in my twisted little mind. I have always been a champion of the pink plastic lawn flamingo. I think I still have a pair that I bought from in a vintage store I used to work and shop at in high school. I just need to track down some legs for them.... I don't know what it is that draws me to them. They have a power over me with their neon Good-n-Plenty Pepto Brooklyn-auntie-manicure molded plastic clef note S-curve prawn tailed undulations. They inspire a kind of ritualized celebration of decadence and delight, as the muses of mirth and mayhem. They are a symbol of why we should not ever take ourselves too seriously. So that's what color does! Ode to the lawn flamingo:

Throughout history, people have loved statuary. There's plenty of evidence, in old paintings, in carvings, even in ancient hieroglyphics, that people have always loved to decorate their surroundings. In early America, for the longest time, there was no lawn ornamentation. Around the turn of the century, the Europeans started bringing over lawn ornaments in the form of bronze statuary. They were beautiful, and very popular, but few people could afford such things. Keep in mind that, before plastics, only rich people could afford to have poor taste. (Featherstone, "Why not My Duck?")



Calder, Flamingo 1974

How do you want to be remembered?

I did something that people enjoyed, something that amused people. That's so much more satisfying than, say, designing something destructive like the atom bomb. And I'll tell you something about people who put out flamingos: They're friendlier than most people. Remember, they don't do it for themselves – they're doing it to entertain you ((Featherstone, "Why not My Duck?").



Figure 61. Flamingo Ode.

CHAPTER NINE IMPROVING MOTION



I
paint
with
shapes.
(Calder quoted in Baer)

Figure 62. Miro, Joan. Ciphers and Constellations in Love with a Woman. 1941.

The sense of motion in painting and sculpture has long been considered as one of the primary elements of the composition.

The Futurists prescribed for its rendition.

Marcel Duchamp's "Nude descending the stairs" is the result of the desire for motion. Here he has also eliminated representative form. This avoids the connotation of ideas which would interfere with the success of the main issue--the sense of movement.

Fernand Leger's "Ballet Mecanique", is the result of the desire for a picture in motion.

Therefore, why not plastic forms in motion? Not a simple translatory or rotary motion but several motions of different types, speeds and amplitudes composing to make a resultant whole. Just as one can compose colors, or forms, so one can compose motions. (Calder, statement from "Modern Painting and Sculpture" exhibit)

The noble and empty spaces were perfect for our purposes. The first act we hired was the amazing Number Man. He was numbered from one to thirty-five, and every part moved. And he was genial and polite, despite the stresses to which his difficult métier subjected him. He never failed to say "Hello" and "Goodbye" and "Why not?" We were happy to have him in the show.

(Barthelme, "The Flight of the Pigeons from the Palace" 131)

Figure 63. Number Man.

CHAPTER TEN

SLAT DANCE: SONG OF THE JOINTS

The Slat Dance is comprised of an empty black stage space and a solo performer dressed in black. Attached to the performer's body are white slats or poles that extend along the various lines of motion (the "joints" or hinge points) of the performer's limbs, such as the arms, legs, and waist/back. In performance, the dancer's body recedes into the background and the only discernable visuals onstage are the motions of the white slats in the black space. As a result, the audience witnesses an extension of the limbs' range of activity through space. In formal aesthetic terms, Slat Dance excites the black/negative space with the white/dynamic lines. The seemingly static uniformity of the plane is enlivened by the geometry of the performer's body along the axes of movement offered by the slats. Due to the rigid texture and enhanced length of the slats, motion and/in space is linear and angular. The lines determined by and explored through the motion of the joints offers fleeting traces of a body defining and moving within the constraints of cubic space. In Slat Dance, then, Schlemmer realizes the concept of "felt volume," which he explains as,

"What I mean are those creations which, in the dance, grow out of spatiality, out of a sense of space. Space, like all architecture, is a form consisting of dimensions and proportion. It is an abstraction in the sense of being in opposition to, if not actually protesting against nature. Space, if it is regarded as determining the laws governing everything which takes place within its borders, also determines the gestures of the dancer within it. By means of the verticals described by the moving, dancing figure a stereometry of space comes into being, almost by itself, out of basic geometry, out of the pursuit of the vertical, horizontal, diagonal, circle and curve. If we imagine space to be filled with a soft plastic mass which registers the dancer's movements as a sequence of negative forms, we should see from this example the direct relationship of the geometry of the plane to the stereometry of space. The body itself can demonstrate its own mathematics by freeing its physical mechanics which then point in the direction of gymnastics and acrobatics. Such aids as poles (the horizontal balancing pole) or stilts (a vertical element) can, as 'extensions of the

tools of movement,' bring space to life by expressing it as a frame consisting of lines, while spheres, cones and tubes can do the same for the three-dimensional relationships within space.”(quoted in Whitford 246)

In light of the graph developed in Chapter Two, my aim here is to evoke the composition of the dance by using haiku as a creative writing analogue that may also imply the dance’s conceptual aims. In Slat Dance the body is reduced to angular slats that define the movement of its hinge points or “joints” in space. The dance is “synthetic” or “brief”(Marinetti, Marinetti197); the seemingly rigid form of the “jointed” limbs of the dancer stand as a metonym for the motion of the body in space that urges us to view this dynamic anew. I use the constraints of the haiku form as a means of evoking the creative dynamics which can be achieved through such reductive processes. I further emphasize the tensions inherent in the dance’s use of white lines of motion within the black constrains of space through the layout on the page and the further reduction of written language to explicitly digitized signs or (stress) marks which represent the slats or “joints” of the haikus. Much as the geometry of the axes created by the slats evokes a feeling of “felt volume,” a space brought to life by the very motions contained within it, so too the white dashes on the page evoke a sense of the haikus that contain their forms and stresses.

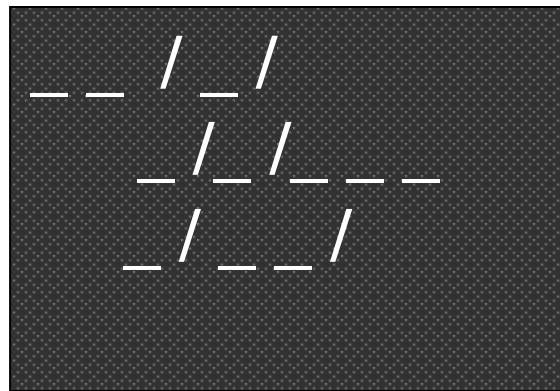


Figure 64. Stress Marks, First Haiku.

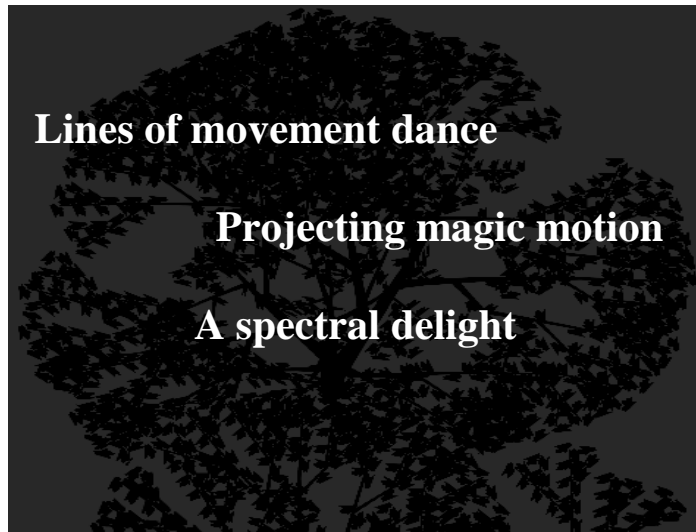


Figure 65. First Haiku.

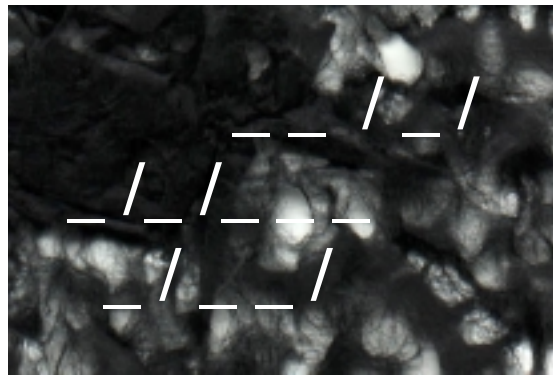


Figure 66. Stress Marks, Second Haiku.

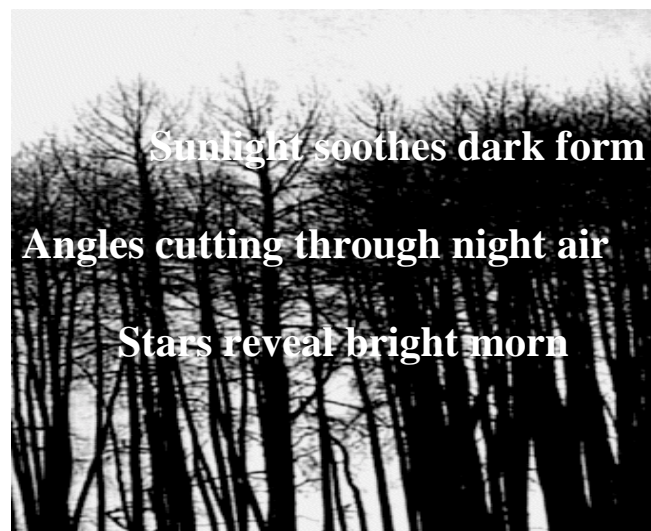


Figure 67. Second Haiku.

This performance is a case where the performer's body is restricted and delineated in terms of the composition of the costume. The length and rigidity of the poles restrict motion along certain axes of the body. Whether or not the body is actually moving with some geometric precision is not known, Since it cannot be seen, save for the traces of motion articulated by the white slats.

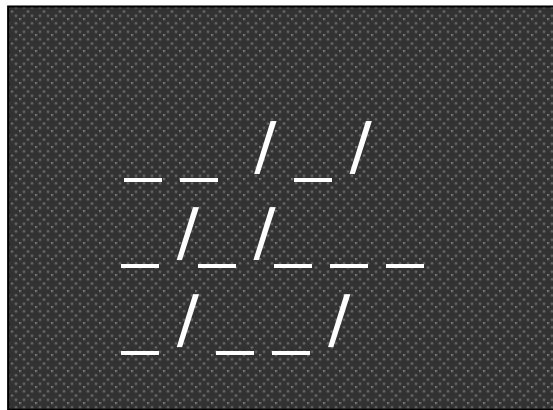


Figure 68. Stress Marks, Third Haiku.

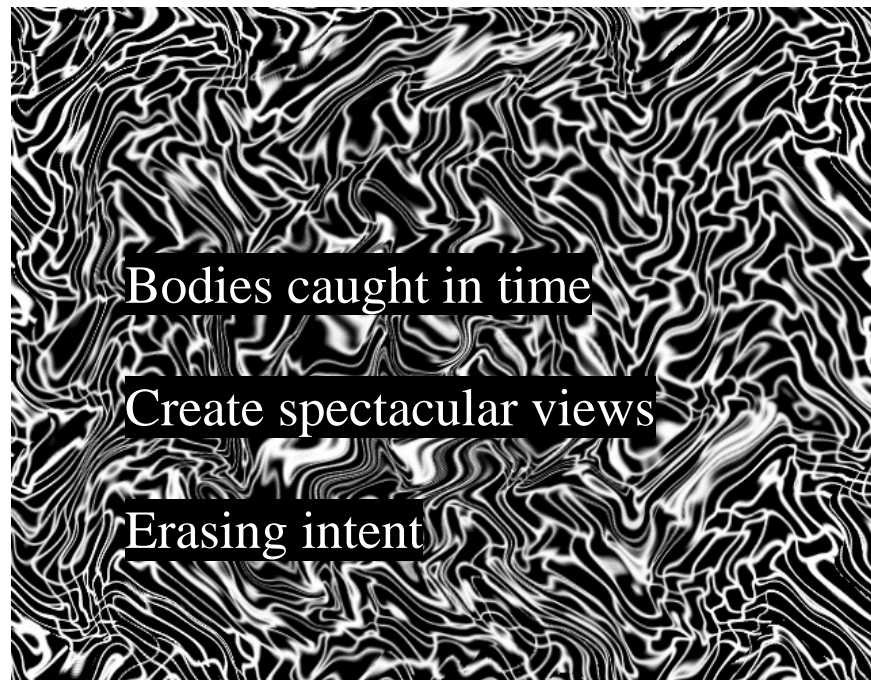


Figure 69. Third Haiku.

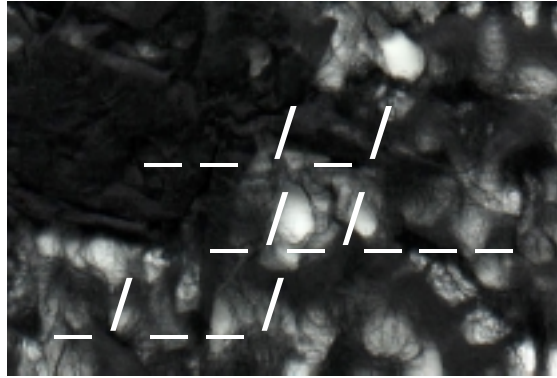


Figure 70. Stress Marks, Fourth Haiku.

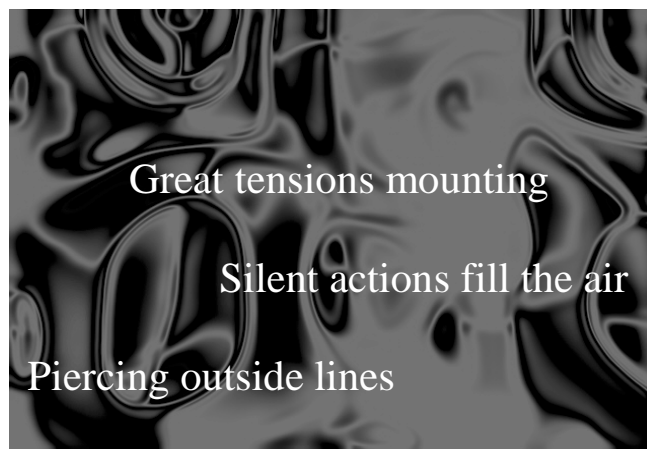


Figure 71. Fourth Haiku.

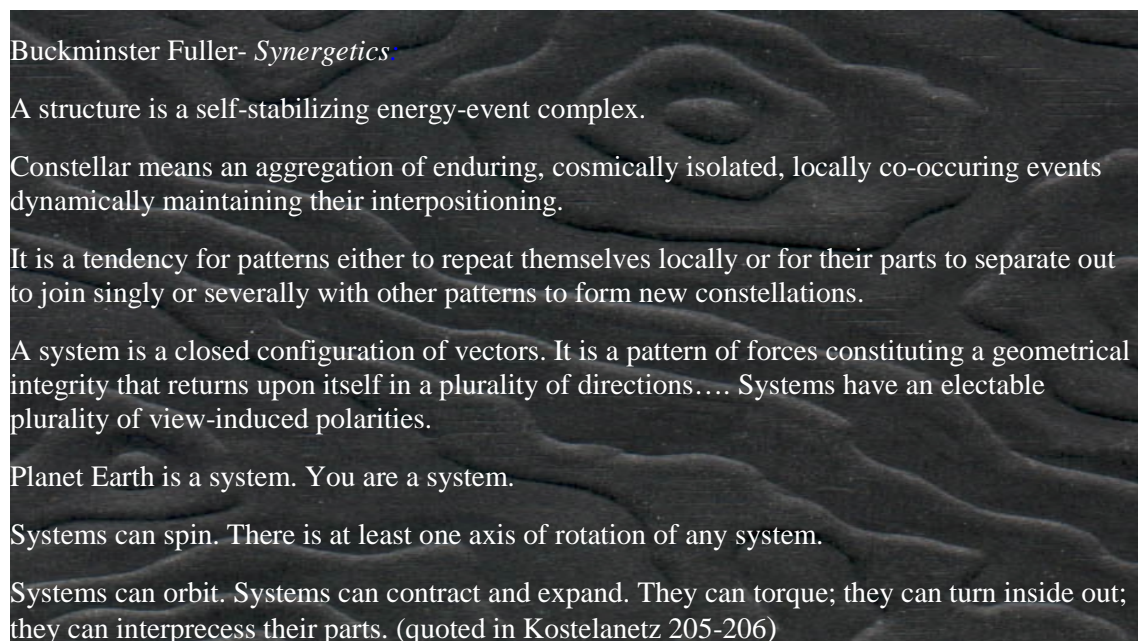
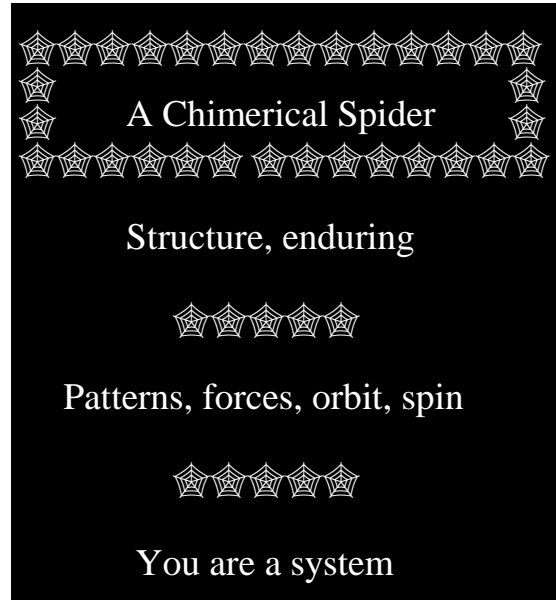


Figure 72. Fuller Pattern of Systems.



Alexander Calder The Spider

Figure 73. Spider Haiku.



CHAPTER ELEVEN NEVER GIVING UP SPACE

Willem 'Big Bill' de Kooning swings perhaps the biggest brush in the contemporary art world, and his hard-charging, go-for-broke style at the easel has long been a matter of wonderment and green envy among his colleagues. How much his tour with the Dodgers influenced the Dutch master is a question oft debated, in Manhattan brasseries and East Hampton gin mills alike. This is one of those mysteries which resist the closest critical attention. Did the painter learn at least part of his ferocious attack during his time with Brooklyn, or did he bring same to Ebbets Field already fully formed? What sticks in memory, in any case is an amazing duel with a countryman and fellow painter in August 1939.

It was the year Piet Mondrian, another Netherlander, was taking a sabbatical from the purity of his severely geometric canvases to pitch for Cincinnati. The great Neoplasticist had insisted on designing his own uniform, a splendor of large red and blue and yellow rectangles immaculately placed against stark white. When de Kooning's moment at the plate came round, the two artists glared at each other in friendly fashion across the 18.4 meters separating them.

"Piet," yelled de Kooning, anent the uniform, "the red, it's too close to the yellow."

"Bill," Mondrian shouted back, "how would you know?"

"A child could see it," de Kooning answered, choking his bat.

"Bill," Mondrian announced calmly and clearly, "that's my space you're leaning all over." And he dusted the Rottdamer's breastbone with a pay-attention pitch that sent Big Bill reeling backwards into the Red's catcher, Ernie Lombardi.

On the next pitch, Mondrian went through his windup (a spectacular affair, given the uniform) and released a perfect strike. De Kooning took a mighty cut and missed. Mondrian's third pitch was low, but within the parameters; de Kooning let it pass him by for a second strike. The doughty Abstract Expressionist was by now visibly irritated, and he rapped the plate with his stick in a way that could not be mistaken for amiability. Mondrian's next pitch was squarely on the invisible line dividing inside from outside, and de Kooning stepped into it with a set of shoulders made massive by decades of paint hurling. The ball rose in the air like a mortar shell, and Kurt Schwitters, * the Cincinnati centerfielder, went back, back, back for it, thrust up his arm, and lost it by a good twelve feet. De Kooning trotted around the bases to extravagant applause, and Mondrian, long after the other players had left the park, was discovered with a tape, in the fading light of an Ohio evening, measuring the diamond in an attempt to prove that the diamond, not his sense of where to place what, had been at fault.

*Schwitters, the German collagist, spent much of his early career in Switzerland and learned his baseball in Basel, where it is called Baselball. (Barthelme, "The Art of Baseball" 71-72)



My fan mail is enormous. Everyone is under six. (Calder quoted in Baer)

Figure 74. Calder, Alexander. Crinkly. 1970.

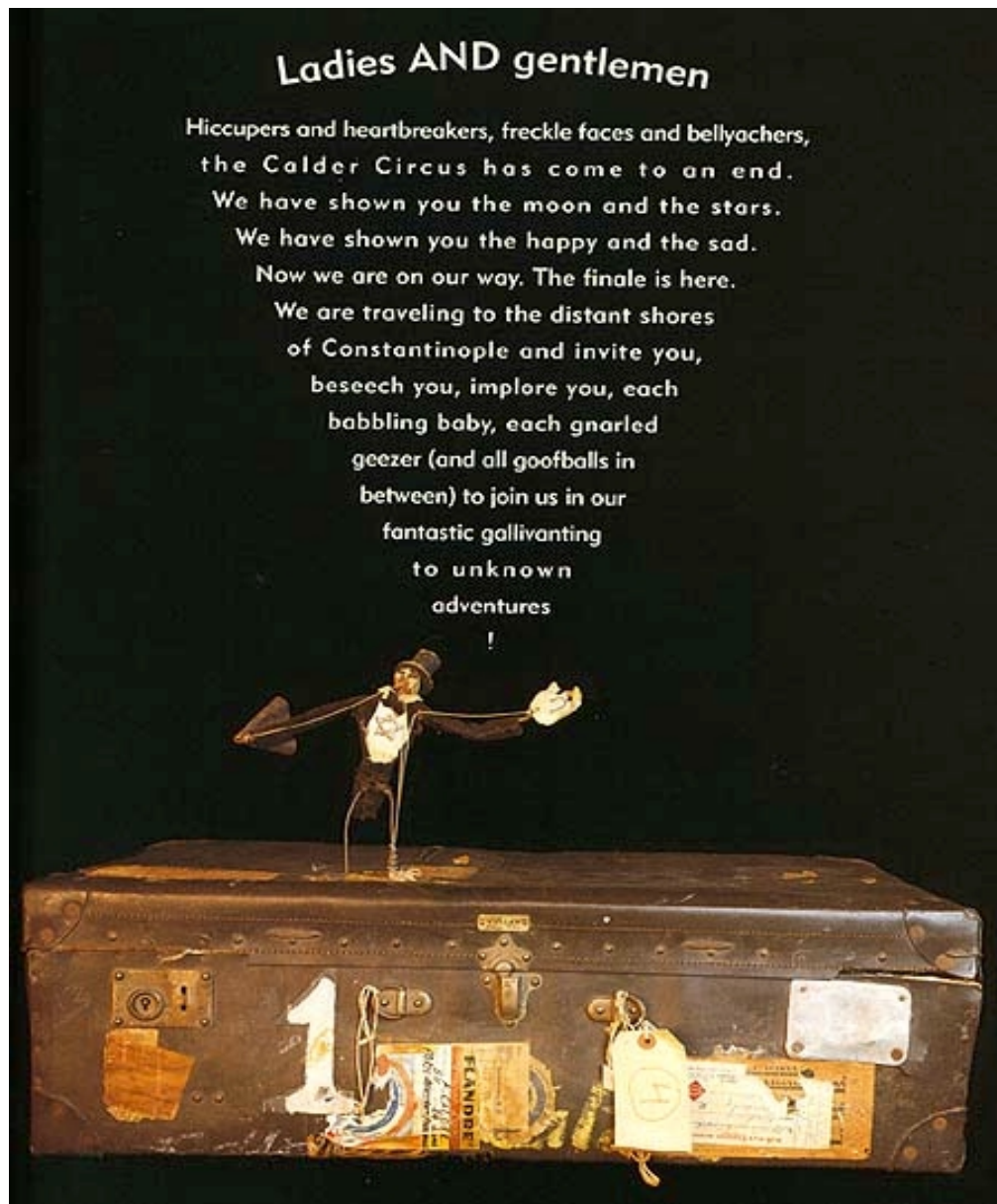


Figure 75. Calder's Circus Finale from "Circus" Webpage.

CHAPTER TWELVE

SPACE DANCES

A: Can you tell me what the lines on the stage mean?

B: They are the axes of the stage, then the diagonals, and inside the resulting square, a circle is drawn. Apart from the center-point marked by the lines on the floor, the central point of the space has also been fixed by stretching light-coloured strings from the corners of the stage; a surprising effect which somehow brings the space to life. (quoted in Drain 46)

Space Dances consists of a series of performance experiments aimed largely at exploring the geometry and stereometry of space, in this case the stage space. As noted above, in the first, most minimal of the experiments, the spatial coordinates of the stage are quite literally marked out by paint and a string. On the floor, is a circle in which the horizontal and vertical axes of the floor plane are marked, and intersect. Overhead, strings or wires reveal the intersecting planes of the entire space. In one experiment, a figure stands at the center of these axes, a still vertical form that in effect becomes the central mediating/meditation point in the spatial systems (Figure 28, bottom image). In a sense, the human figure is used to key and map out the spatial coordinates of the stage. In another experiment, the human figure stands on a box down center of the wire nexus, which has been further dissected to form a more detailed illustration of the lines in space and vis a vis the human body. The figure, then, performs an X leap in the air.

A: But what for? Are the actors so stupid they need such aids to orient themselves?

B: No. Because the geometry and stereometry of the stage space are in this way “revealed”, and the notion of the dimensions awakened, the space acquires a specific character it did not have before. Its accordance with laws becomes perceptible, the actor, performer or dancer is “bewitched” by this spatial system which otherwise he would be unaware of, and he moves within it differently than he would in the indeterminate fluidity of space (quoted in Drain 46; emphases in original).

In another Space Dance,

a white square, filling the whole stage, has been outlined on the black stage floor, in which a circle and diagonals have been inserted. A fellow in yellow tights comes tripping on stage and traverses it, hopping hurriedly along the white lines. His head is inserted into a globular mask made of colored sheet metal. A second fellow in red tight, also masked, steps on the white lines and paces along them with generous steps. Finally, a third one, in blue tights calmly strides across the lines. The individual movements of the three encounter each other, interpenetrate, and dissolve in the most diverse figures. Three gaits of the human body—three characteristics of color—three characteristics of form, all of them inextricably linked: yellow, pointed hopping—red, full paces—blue, calm strides. (quoted in Wingler 157).

Again, the floor grid and three dimensional nexus of lines filling the vertical space provide a basic illustration of the dimensional tensions of the stage space. They also imply (or come to imply) planes that are activated when a moving body enters the space. In his drawings, Schlemmer further elaborates the network of cubical space dynamics, with and without a body in the space. Also there are diagrams of the arcs of motion that extend from the flow of the moving body, which are suggested in performance by the circle and gridded axes. In other words, the movement of the performer is determined by the geometric stage grid(s) while, in turn, it activates that grid. The aesthetics of form and line within the stage planes are highlighted in the initial Space Dances. Words such as “tension,” “still” and “active” articulate some of the formal properties that are evoked in these performance experiments. Significantly, the body does not “act” alone, it utilizes the active dynamics of space to inform his/her movement. Man and space “act” together.

A: But doesn't such an exaggerated principle kill off what is best in a dancer: the unconscious, the self-surrender, the exaltation? Doesn't it rob him of his soul? After all, the dancer isn't a gym teacher or a traffic warden. It is just this quality of soul and ecstasy we demand of the artist.

B: Certainly, and I would be the last to want to see that stifled. Let me remind you of the music of J. S. Bach, which is a wondrous work of adherence to

contrapuntal laws, and equally of course a wonder of sensibility. Or to take another example from the pictorial arts: the book of proportions of Albrecht Durer, that exceptional work on measure, of the human form in particular, where the secrets of number are sought with fanatical zeal. Law and number have hindered neither of these two great artists from revealing a spiritual content, indeed, they attained this only through consummated form. To return to our stage: why should law and measure be banned here, where they advance upon us in proportions of the space, the proportions of man, and in every form, just as they do in colour, in light and in the passage of time, etc.? (quoted in Drain 46-47)

In a Space Dance specified as Dance of Forms,

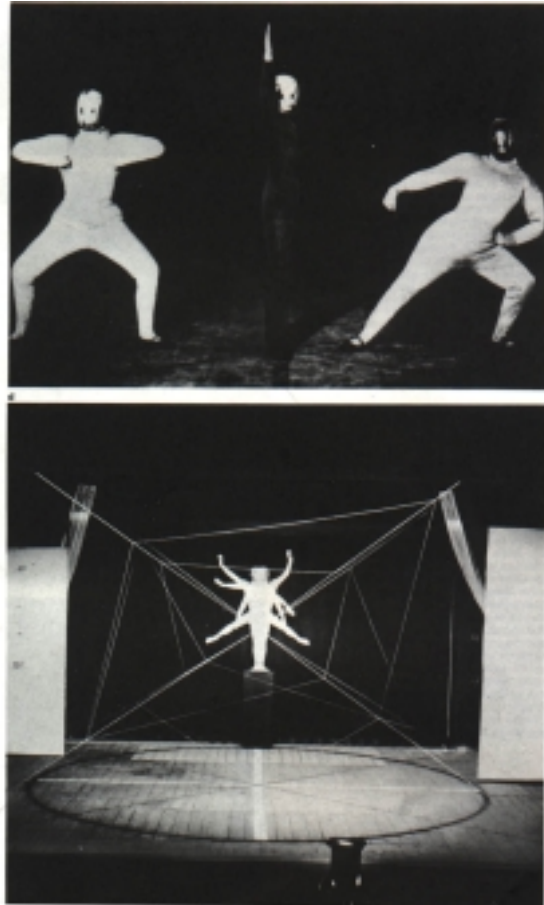
“[t]he same three fellows [are] reinforced with “forms”: with a large, white, light ball, with a small, silver, and heavy sphere, with a long, slender, and light baton, with a short, thin, and heavy bar and something between the two, a club. With gliding, swinging, and angular movements the dancers join these forms into a figure, remain in that pose for a moment, dissolve it and then put together a new, surprising combination. An imaginative game with simple, elementary forms. The human bodies which are participating in this dance are “working” with accuracy, but without being imitative of puppets. Their bodies are casually tense just as they would be if performing natural movements for some kind of work.” (quoted in Wingler 157)

In further explorations, costumes that emphasize and limit certain parts of the body are added. The form imposed upon the body affect its range of motion. Color is also incorporated into the costume, which effects new compositions and harmonies (Figure 28, top image). In Dance of Gestures, masks and props are added along with specific gestures. These more social or personal characterizations impact not only the human figure but also the geometric and stereometric dynamics of the stage space. The concluding Space Dance evokes a dynamic living space that in formal aesthetic terms gives rise to elemental, universal associations.

“Space and body mathematics, the planimetric and stereometric relationships of space together with the metaphysics inherent in the human body shall unite into a numerical, mystical synthesis...space! Only to be comprehended by feeling; then by pacing and touching its boundaries: a help is the geometry of the floor: center mark, axes, diagonals, circle, etc. A help also perhaps the lines through space, which separate and divide the room in order to make it understandable and

comprehensible in this way. May the delineation of space solidify into two-dimensional shapes and the shapes crystallize into bodies that will analyze the nature of space and will vary the space as a whole.” (quoted in Wingler 472)

These space dances make me think of all the different kinds of spaces we fill, define and negotiate on a daily basis: workspace, home space, workspace within home space, personal space, shared space, *my* space. Has anyone ever invaded your space? What makes it yours? Speaking of, ever notice how other peoples stuff in your space is a problem, but not your own, no matter how much or how messy? I tend to space out these days with thoughts like this. The only way space makes sense to us is in how we order and organize our relationship to it. It’s a dimension just beyond our complete comprehension, but we can still make sense of it by applying some of these general formal laws. I’ll try to fill this space with some examples. Don’t forget to read the spaces in between. (Me, 127)



(in Wingler 473)

Figure 76. Space Dances.

In the following narrative, “Space Fields,” I create a subjective and evocative grid in which to map my own activities and experiences within the “playing” space of a soccer field. My aim, vis a vis the graph from Chapter Two, is to render my own personal process of learning and understanding of Oskar Schlemmer and the Stage Workshop’s experiments and theories concerning the dynamics of the body in space. As I am not a dancer, I utilize my own example of a clearly defined space in which I’ve had the opportunity to experience a heightened awareness of the dynamics of movement

within and with that space. I cite the modes of Schlemmer's methods and measures of demarcating the body in space through the descriptive process of mapping out the limits, props, costumes and ensuing motions contained within the space of a soccer field. Finally, I cite Schlemmer's graphing experiments through the use of graphic design choices of the text which illustrate the movement of the text both figuratively and literally.

SPACE FIELDS

I recently became space "bewitched" when I began playing soccer a few years ago on a woman's league for ages 28+. I had decided that it would be great, not only for the exercise, but for the social nature of the activity as well. I don't mean friendships, although there are some very interesting people on the team; I was more interested in the nature of the competition. I had messed around a little in high school playing soccer, but **1.** that was a looong time ago and **2.** I never really did enough to claim any degree of mastery in it. I was both nervous and excited about discovering/reawakening any competitive/athletic nature that I might be harboring. A soccer field is a big space to have to navigate when you're not sure what you're doing and slightly out of shape! You quickly learn your boundaries, both the marked edges of the field, and the unmarked zones of position. An important line to keep in mind, and one that is as fluid as the motions on the field, is that you must always have two defenders, including the goalie, between you and the other net, but only if you are receiving the ball: off sides, the momentum buster of many a breakaway moment and a strategy all defensive lines will use.

It was during the second half of my first game, after fumbling around in a midfield position, that I volunteered to fill in the goalie spot for the woman who seemed to regularly play there....

Add props and costume:

- ✚ Net: the goalie's personal space on the playing field, as well as the ultimate defensive zone. It's not that other defenders can't come in close, but when a goalie shouts, "I got it!" its best to move out of the way. The net can seem overwhelming when a rush of offenders is coming your way, or a ball heads for the upper/lower corner opposite your current spot, but it also marks your objective quite clearly: keep the ball out of here!
- ✚ Gloves: not essential, but especially helpful when it's cold or wet. The cold stings and water makes a ball quite slippery. I personally like a thinner glove though. I need to be able to feel the ball as I grab it, not just paw at it.
- ✚ Knee pads: I've played without them, but I don't recommend it, especially if it is cold, wet, or a constant offensive. You need to be able to fill the whole space of your defensive zone, which includes getting down on the ground quickly.
- ✚ A shirt of a color other than your teammates or the opposing teams' colors. In a tight place, everyone needs to be able to clearly recognize the roles. Your teammates will stay out of your way, if they know you are there for a ball. Both you and your opponents want to be clear of the sides when the competition gets fierce. The referees need to be able to clearly recognize who can touch the ball with their hands. (Only goalies get that right; it comes with the territory.) Many people use those long sleeved shirts with the padded arms in bright colors. Any shirt of a different color will do. My personal favorite is a yellow tee shirt with a screen print of the Grinch on the back that my old roommate designed. I think it aids my goalie persona.

Kaboom!!!

Something happened that I was not expecting!

Some sort of *killer goalie instinct* took over in me.

I actually did well

I ENJOYED myself! *^#!

Goal (gol), *n.* **1.** the result or achievement toward which effort is directed; aim; end. **2.** the terminal point in a race. **3.** a pole or other object by which such a point is marked. **4.** an area, basket, cage or other object or structure toward or into which players of various games attempt to throw, carry, hit or drive a ball, puck, etc., to score a point or points. **5.** the act of throwing, carrying, kicking, driving, etc., a ball or puck into such an area or object. **6.** the score made by this act. [ME *gol* boundary, limit; cf. OE *gælan* to hinder, impede] **-goal'less**, *adj.* **-Syn.** **1.** target; purpose, object, objective, intent, intention. **2.** finish. ("goal")

I am fundamentally aware of my spatial delineations when "in the goal." I have certain boundaries that I must oblige in terms of my actions - my limit. This space also determines my objective for action, once I step into that "role." Mine is an aggressive geometry, which guides me instinctually to defend the parameters that define my territory of action.

In one on one encounters I rush out and C ✂

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off

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!

I block both perspective and direction with a full-on rush of speed and adrenaline. It is amazing what effects can be had from a little frantic forward momentum in countering the potentialities in a ball's trajectories before they can be articulated off the foot of an opponent. Whether my next move is to d
i
v
e for the ball, or to transfer my rhythmic

stampede into a **whollopingchoruslinehighsteppingpunt**, depends upon the unique choreography of each particular duet.

When I am confronted with more attackers, I concern myself with the more tight knit articulation of creating a web of defense in the space between the ball and the net. I am dancing a nexus of three dimensions to define, confine, refine my limited powers in the four dimensions of this S t P i A m C e E. If I squint, I can see the tracers and slow motion articulations as my body rises and falls, s t r e t c h e s and b e n d s, plots all axes of the grid that extends from this space called "*The Goal*."

In one game, I had so much action in the first half of the game, a whole forty five minutes of shot upon shot, that I hardly remember any particular save I made. The guy who helps coach us told me he wished he had a video camera because I must have stopped 15 attempts that first half alone! All I know is that when I walked off at halftime I thought I caught a glimpse of some strange cubist grid of motion still projected upon the empty field. All of this compact spatial activity seems to be pent up in my composite memory like the impression of limb that forms a cast. Suddenly, I *get* what you mean Herr Schlemmer: I *get* the notion of space made of a pliable substance, which leaves a negative relief when the body moves through it. It is an aggressive geometry, which guides me instinctually to defend the parameters that define my territory of action.

More recently, for a change of (s) pace, I have begun playing out of the goal the whole game, playing the other position I found that I like, left forward. I have less experience here but the rush is the same. Only now I'm on the attack: trying to negotiate the vast undulations of motion from across half a field or more; confronting so many more bodies along the way whose own dance steps I must learn or else force them to follow my lead and, in the case of my opponents, hope they have two left feet; wanting

not to trip over my own feet as I attempt to learn from the reflected projections I see mirrored on the other side; aiming for the **flash** and *SWISH* of a ball soaring in the follow-through of my trigonometric calculations for reaching the opposing net.

Props:

✚ Uniforms are helpful when playing in a league, but in more informal settings, as long as you can move and know whose on your team, you're ok.

✚ A good pair of turf shoes or cleats goes a long way. They help with traction in tight maneuvers and on wet fields. They can aid your speed across the grass. They also make a cool sound off the field.

I like the feeling of flying past an opponent and overtaking a ball for my own objective. Think of it, our duty here is to run that piece of round leather or space age plastic from our end of the field to the other end, and keep our opponent from doing the same. A simple concept, but exciting in its execution, especially when done by someone with the other balance and control skills that come with good ball handling. You've got to know how to use your props!

✚ I almost forgot the ball! There's not much of a game without that sphere of contention. It's not a large orb, but it has the power to make people follow it around a box of space in pursuit of rectilinear containment.

Soccer is about negotiating space and dimensions. Its about the forms we use and take on to navigate the laws its space(s). The matter of form helps not only in my comprehension of what takes place on the field, but also allows me to appreciate the beauty and power to be found in its play. Everyone can be a formalist in the dimensions of the game.

One last thought before I leave this space, consider Schlemmer's notion of the pliable space. I've alluded to feeling it in the concentrated motions of an offensive onslaught. But I think there's another way to mark the impression of plastic space. Standing in the water letting the waves break in a tunnel of space around you is one

possibility. Another is making snow angels. Deep impressions of the happy dance of childhood seem to fill this space.

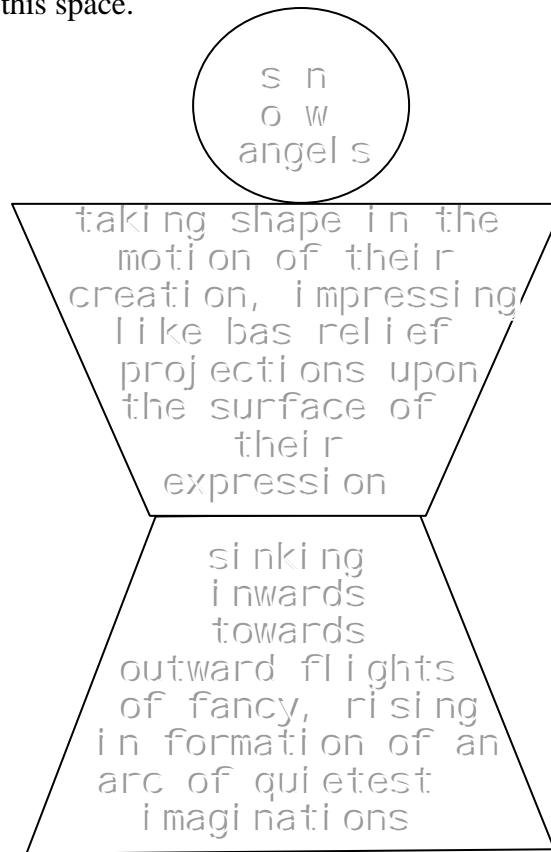


Figure 77. Snow Angel.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

CONCLUSION

The methodology for this study is also one of the subjects; namely, the use of performative writing to evoke and engage in the creative use of aesthetics in composition. This study was designed to interpret the use of formal aesthetics as a creative and performative choice in composition and expression. The inspiration was the Bauhaus school and the Stage Workshop's use of formal aesthetics in design and performance.

In Chapter Four, an interpretation of a Bauhaus history offered a partial yet evocative sense of what the Bauhaus experience of form might have been like. In chapter Six, a lesson on formal aesthetics lay the groundwork for an informed reading of the three representative dances I interpreted in Chapters Eight, Ten, and Twelve. In live performance, the dances are manifestations of form, extended by associative connections and inventive interplay. As such, formal aesthetics offers a way to compose and interpret pieces that allow one to draw on both the universal and the more particular associative interpretations and inventions that come to mind.

Throughout this study, I have referred back Della Pollock's terms for the qualities of performative writing (evocative, metonymic, subjective, nervous, citational, and consequential) as a framework for my approach to discussing and analyzing formal aesthetics and/at the Bauhaus Stage Workshop, and as they relate to Futurist avant-garde concepts of theater (atechincal, synthetic, novel, dynamic/simultaneous, autonomous/allogical/unreal, and confident/vivacious). These key elements form the graph composed in Chapter Two that became my model for action in writing. I have also apply formal aesthetics discourse as a method of interpreting the definitions, principles, and practices of the formal aesthetics designed and used by the Bauhaus, particularly

Oskar Schlemmer and the Stage Workshop. Additionally, I investigated both performative writing and formal aesthetics as subjects of inquiry in experimenting with how visual and written language are connected in both creative and practical terms. By uniting these two methods of inquiry, I have hoped to “make possible” a means of creative comprehension and expression, derived from a point of mutual design, technique and motivation shared by formal aesthetics and performative writing. It is this core element in the literary and visual arts that I would like to address here. Klee expresses a possible way to articulate this center. He writes,

“After these general hypotheses I shall begin where all pictorial form begins: with the point which is set in motion.

In prehistoric times when no distinction was made between writing and drawing [line] was the given element. Our children, too, mostly start with it; one day they discover the phenomenon of the point in motion-- and we can scarcely imagine with what enthusiasm. At first they move the pencil with the greatest freedom in whatever direction causes pleasure. As they look at the first results, they simultaneously discover that the pathways they have traced are now clearly described. Those children who continue to be delighted by chaos are not natural makers of images, but others will soon progress to the creation of a certain order. They begin to be critical of the pathways they have followed. The chaos of the initial game yields to the beginnings of order.” (quoted in Whitford 70).

In both written and pictorial composition, it is the point in space that gives rise to order in creative intent and design.

In formal aesthetics practice, the ideal point or center is a site of calm and focus. Objects placed in a central position induce a sense of reverential reflection “Whether they be Tantric or Christian or nonspecifically religious” visual aids of meditation tend to be placed “in the center of the page” or space “so as to better enable the viewer to ‘center the mind’” (Bang 90). In conceptual terms too, formal aesthetic is based in this notion of center in so far as they derive from primary, elemental laws and forces which, in turn, provoke universal responses. This is not to say that other paradigms and discourses for

interpretation are not in operation; rather, in their abstracted forms, aesthetic elements derive from and prompt shared processes and impulses towards ordering the random flux of visual stimuli into meaningful forms.

The Bauhaus masters' writings and works manifest this notion of formal unity. In particular, Oskar Schlemmer's performances and dances apply these universal generalizations based in natural laws as an impetus for creative exploration and expression. He does not view these core concepts as limitations to creativity, but as key grids through which both composers and viewers can construct meaning from and with formal compositions.

“As for myself, I am for the bodily mechanical, the mathematical dance. And further I am for the starting with the one-times-one and the ABC because I see strength in simplicity -- in which every significant innovation is rooted. Simplicity, understood as the elemental and typical out of which the various and particular develop organically; simplicity, understood as the *tabula rasa* and complete removal of all eclectic baggage of all styles and periods, ought to provide a path to the future. It will indeed provide it if the person who embodies this philosophy of dance has feelings, is a human being.” (quoted in Whitford 245)

Schlemmer himself applied this understanding of rooted simplicity to create highly inventive dances and performances. Although he adhered to (in fact, based his performances on) formal aesthetics, I believe it is fair to observe that his own personal style also characterized the dances. In general terms, then, it is an understanding and use of the affective principles of formal aesthetics that allows for variety and invention in the creative compositions that make use of these forms and principles.

Language itself is a system of sense making. The forms or genres of written (and spoken) language are generalized structures for meaning making, which are derived from more specific grids of experience. Genres and styles of verbal expression can be coded

according to different social, historical, and cultural contexts from which they are derived. The problem that arises with this kind of language generalization is when the structures are made, or assumed, to stand for universal modes of expression. Performative writing can be one way around this problem. These general codes can be played with, juxtaposed, challenged, manipulated, and opposed to create new modes of expression. The rules of language can be used to enhance personal creative expression in a work. In short, the rules of language offer a way toward a more personal or creative center of expression. Barthelme, of course, is reflexive toward this very idea in many of his works. In Sentence, he ruminates,

[T]hus, considering everything carefully, in the sweet light of ceremonial axes, in the run-mad skimble-skamble of information sickness, we must make a decision as to whether we should proceed, or go back, in the latter case enjoying the pathos of eradication, in the former case reading an erotic advertisement which begins, *How to Make Your Mouth a Blowtorch of Excitement* (but wouldn't that overtax our mouthwashes?), attempting, during the pause [...] to imagine a better sentence, worthier, more meaningful, like those in the Declaration of Independence, or a bank statement showing that you have seven thousand kroner more than you thought you had--a statement summing up the unreasonable demands that you make on life, and one that also asks the question, if you can imagine these demands, why are they not routinely met, tall fool? but of course it is not that query that this infected sentence has set out to answer (and hello! To our girlfriend Rosetta Stone, who has stuck by us through thin and thin) but some other query that we shall some day discover the nature of, and here comes Ludwig, the expert on sentence construction we have borrowed from the Bauhaus, who will--"Guten Tag, Ludwig!"--probably find a way to cure the sentence's sprawl, by using the improved ways of thinking developed in Weimar--"I am sorry to inform you that the Bauhaus no longer exists, that all of the great masters who formerly thought there are either dead or retired, and that I myself have been reduced to constructing books on how to pass the examination for police sergeant"--and Ludwig falls through the Tugendhat House into the history of man-made objects; a disappointment to be sure, but it reminds us that the sentence itself is a man-made object, not the one we wanted of course, but still a construction of man, a structure to be treasured for its weakness, as opposed to the strength of stones. (Barthelme 162-163)

The structures of language become one's own only when they are understood for their

central characteristics, and then re-centered toward a personal formation of expression.

In combining formal aesthetics and performative writing, I hope to highlight the potential of both forms in the composition and comprehension of creative works. These modes of expression offer the producer and viewer shared structures of meaning in which to discover personal centers of creation and interpretation. Formal aesthetics should not be viewed as a system of limitations; rather, as a shared set of elemental concepts that can be used playfully to evoke sensory connections and responses in composition. Formal aesthetics is one way to read a work, one that is primary in its visual framework. A formal reading does not replace other methods of understanding but offers as a starting point for comprehension. From it, other, more culturally defined codes can arise, be excerpted, set upon or against, combined or aligned with the centering point of creation and the interpretations of meaning.

ODE TO AESTHETIC CHICKS AND CREATIVE CATS

To have become a reader was faintly miraculous for me, given how nightmarish reading was made for us in school. I have the most intense memory of what reading meant: You went to assembly and you sat, row by row, class by class. And then a teacher on stage read the story. Reading consisted of listening with your hands folded in your lap. Kids assigned by teachers to be monitors walked up and down to see if your hands indeed were clasped tightly. If your hands were folded during the entire reading, you might get a tiny gold star, which you would paste in your book. So of course all you thought about were your hands.

I dreaded it, but we had to endure. And you see how anti-reading, how anti-life, the situation was. There are very few books from school that I loved. In fact, there's only one—*Chicken Little*. And I remember it not because *Chicken Little* is such a great story, but because of the pictures. It was a school reader, and the pictures were simple and they were all yellow. And I loved to turn the page and see all those yellow pictures: little, fat, yellow pictures running all over the pages. (Sendak quoted in “Childhood Books I Remember”)



Figure 78. Little Chickens.

The first real book I ever owned was *The Prince and the Pauper* by Mark Twain, which my sister bought me. And I flipped when she did. I still have it--that poor, abused book. I smelled it, I squeezed it, I tried to bite into it. I couldn't believe that I had such a book, that I owned such a rare thing. Beautiful red cloth, a shiny picture pasted on the binding, and beautiful end-papers. It stood on my dresser, it came to bed with me, I stroked it. I didn't actually *read* it until many years later. And I like *The Prince and the Pauper*, but first and foremost was the joy of the object itself.

It's a very good sign if a book feels good, and smells good, and tastes good. Because they're love objects. I've devoted my life to designing books--not just doing pictures for them, but designing books and worrying about the bindings, and the end-papers, and all the details of book-making. Because I know that I was not--at least I hope not--a demented child all by myself in the universe. I think kids get pleasure out of everything--milk cartons, cereal boxes--and a book that feels good is like a toy, it's like a teddy bear. You hug it, you squeeze it, you take it to bed. Then it has the added magnificence of being readable. This is extremely important; I've devoted my life to those other freaky kids who lick, sniff, and carry on over their books before they even read them. (Sendak quoted in "Childhood Books I Remember")



Agnes Varda, Calder in Paris



Alexander Calder, Portrait of the Artist

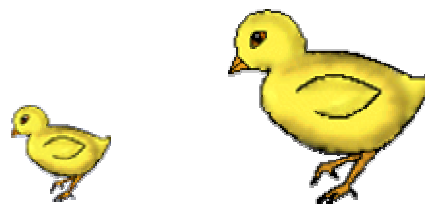
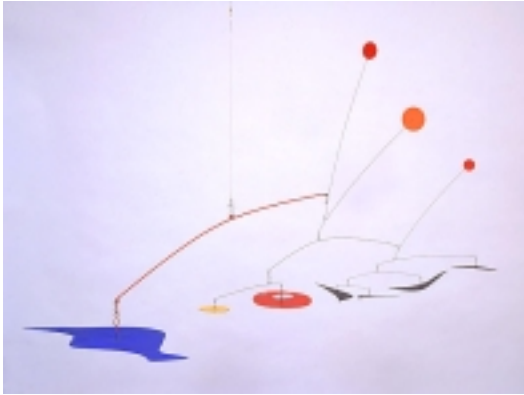


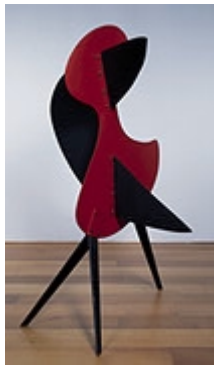
Figure 79. Ode to Chicks and Cats. (Figure Continued)



Polychrome and Horizontal Bluebird



Alexander Calder, Blue Feather



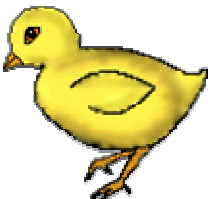
Alexander Calder, Big Bird



Flamingo



(“Circus”)



CHAPTER FOURTEEN POSTSCRIPT

“Add this to Rhetoric”

It is posed and it is posed.
But in nature it merely grows.
Stones pose in the falling night;
And beggars dropping to sleep,
They pose themselves and their rags.
Shucks...lavender moonlight falls.
The buildings pose in the sky
And you, as you paint, the clouds,
Grisaille, impearled, profound,
Pfft.... In the way you speak
You arrange, the thing is posed,
What in nature merely grows.

To-morrow when the sun,
For all your images,
Comes up the sun, bull fire,
Your images will have left
No shadow of themselves.
The poses of speech, of paint,
Of music-Her body lies
Worn out, her arm falls down,
Her fingers touch the ground.
Above her, to the left,
A brush of white, the obscure,
The moon without a shape,
A fringed eye in a crypt.
The sense creates the pose.
In this it moves and speaks.
This is the figure and not
An evading metaphor.

Add this. It is to add.
(Stevens 61)

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